

Mandate of the Independent Expert on the enjoyment of all human rights by older persons

Call for contributions: The right to adequate housing of older persons

To inform her report, the Independent Expert wishes to receive written contributions from relevant stakeholders, including national and local governments, national and international non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions, international and regional inter-governmental organizations, United Nations agencies and entities, activists, and academics.

She strongly encourages sharing concrete examples of good practices where available.

She invites all interested stakeholders to share their views and provide information on any or all the following issues:

1. What are the **local and national legal, policy and institutional frameworks** protecting and promoting the right to adequate housing of older persons? Please identify both existing and planned legal frameworks such as constitutional provisions, laws, regulations, or decrees.

Home Adaptations:

*Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996*¹- states that Housing Authorities must offer mandatory, means tested grants to help meet the costs of home adaptations to both owner occupiers and tenants. This provides a framework for the provision of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) which is allocated through the *Better Care Fund* (BCF). Councils also have the discretionary powers to help people who need home adaptations e.g. fast tracking installation, non- means tested grants for specific types of smaller adaptations.

*Care Act 2014*²- states that Social Services must provide assistance with community equipment and minor adaptations, as well as offering related information and advice. Social Services also have discretionary powers to help with the cost of home adaptations.

Accessibility Standards for new homes:

*Building Regulations (revised 2015)*³- The Building Regulations are the national standards for the construction of new buildings in England. Regulation M4(1) Category 1 'visitable' is mandatory for all new dwellings. M4(2) Category 2 is for 'accessible and adaptable' dwellings. M4(3) Category 3 is for 'wheelchair user' dwellings. Building all new homes to "visitable standards" (M4(1)) is currently the mandatory minimum standard, however this category is lenient on allowing exceptions which means that

¹ Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/contents> (accessed 23/03/22)

² Care Act 2014, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted> (accessed 23/03/23)

³ Building Regulations (revised 2015): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/building-regulation-amendment-regulations-2015-circular-012015> (accessed 23/03/23)

new homes often do not end up with step free access or amenities that can be easily used. This standard does not future proof homes as they are not built to be easily adaptable. In addition to this, the current standard does not provide for any wheelchair accessible measures. In the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (2021)⁴ the government acknowledge that older people (and all generations) would benefit from housing that is built to be accessible and adaptable, however as this is not currently enforced as a mandatory standard for new homes many developers choose not to apply it.

Local Authorities can include policies aimed at increasing the number of accessible new homes in the Local Plan for their area. For example, the London Plan requires all new homes to be built to a minimum of M4(2) with 10% M4(3)⁵. However, draft Local Plans are subject to scrutiny at a Local Plan Inquiry, and draft policies that aim to increase the number of accessible homes may receive objections from some housing developers. The Government Inspector considering the Local Plan may then feel obliged to delete the draft policy because it does not accord with the national minimum. A Government consultation into [raising the mandatory accessibility standard](#)⁶, 'Raising accessibility standards for new homes', was completed in 2020- C&RE and the Older Peoples Housing Champion's Network responded to this consultation, advocating for all new homes to be to M4(2) and 10% M4(3), however we are still awaiting the outcome of this.

Existing Homes- Decent Homes:

*Decent Homes Standard*⁷ and *Housing Act*⁸. The Decent Homes Standard was developed as a national measure of the condition of the housing stock. It was initially created to set a minimum standard for social housing. It was defined in the Housing Act 2004 (updated 2006). The Decent Homes Standard also applies to private rented and owner occupied properties but local authority's obligations and powers of enforcement differ across each of the tenures. The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is one technical measure used to determine if a home is "decent" or "non- decent". There is concern that this standard is at risk of being removed or reduced following the Government decision to [review](#) it in 2020.

Previous funding to address housing disrepair, such as means-tested grants for lower income homeowners, and funding for area-based housing improvements, has been completely withdrawn in recent years. England has some of the oldest housing stock in Europe, and without the support in place to maintain and improve existing homes we are seeing an increase in non-decent homes- currently 2 million older households live in non- decent homes in England, most of whom are owner occupiers⁹.

⁴ National Planning Policy Framework 2021, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> . Accessed on 23/03/22

⁵ The London Plan 2021. Available at:

https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/the_london_plan_2021.pdf. Accessed 23/03/22

⁶ Raising accessible standards for new homes 2022, available at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/raising-accessibility-standards-for-new-homes>. Accessed on 23/03/22

⁷ Decent Homes Standard 2006, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/a-decent-home-definition-and-guidance>. Accessed on 23/03/22

⁸ Housing Act 2004, available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/34/contents>. Accessed on 23/03/22

⁹ Garrett H, Burriss S, (2015) Homes and ageing in England BRE Bracknell, IHS BRE Press

Housing, Health and Social Care:

*NHS Long Term Plan*¹⁰ - places significant emphasis on prevention of poor health as well as integration with social care and delivering health care at or closer to home. We know that common health problems, such as heart disease, respiratory infections, stroke and arthritis, may be caused or made worse by the condition of our homes, and the risk of falls increases with age. Home Improvement Agencies (HIA) offering handyman services, repairs, impartial housing information and advice and financial support are not only hugely beneficial to making homes safer & healthier places to live but also to ensuring people have the right information to make informed choices about their home and future- this is vital in preventing avoidable illnesses and hospital admissions. Unfortunately due to a decade of austerity with real- term reductions in budgets worsened now by the impact of the Covid19 Pandemic, many HIAs have been forced to close or limit their services, leaving many older people unable to find the trusted support they require to maintain their home to safe standards.

*Social Care White Paper (2021)*¹¹- The Government has launched its 10 year vision for Social Care, 'People at the heart of care', which includes funding plans for the next three years. There is a welcome recognition of the importance of home in relation to care and support for adults of all ages with a recurring phrase of 'Making every decision about care a decision about housing'. However, most of the listed housing actions, funding and initiatives are related to building new, specialist and supported housing. Whilst it acknowledged that most people live in mainstream housing as they age there is a reduction in the DFG budget in next three years. There is also a commitment to funding housing services that offer repairs, however no amount is specified and there is concern that this will be expected to come out of already stretched existing budgets.

*Integration White Paper and new Integrated Care Systems*¹² (2022): Government has published its proposals for health and care integration, 'Joining up care for people, places and populations'. Whilst the importance of housing is mentioned in the White Paper and we support the ambition to integrate services, there needs to be adequate resources available to deliver this effectively and a long term funding plan is needed. With the introduction of Integrated Care Partnerships and a remit that includes tackling health inequalities, there should be an opportunity to incorporate housing into emerging new systems and performance/ delivery frameworks. Incorporating an aim to address patients' housing quality as a priority outcome for health and care integration- if this opportunity was taken we believe it would have significant impacts on older people's health and whole quality of life.

Levelling Up Agenda (2022)

Government has published plans for reducing the gap between different parts of the UK in a document, [Levelling up](#).¹³ The main focus is on improving transport, education and broadband. However, the importance of housing to the levelling up agenda is noted, emphasising increasing home ownership, and the quality of existing homes. Given that half of non-decent homes (2 million) are lived in by older

¹⁰ NHS Long Term Plan 2019, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/nhs-long-term-plan-launched>. Accessed on 23/03/22

¹¹ People at the Heart of Care 2021, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>. Accessed on: 23/03/22

¹² *Integration White Paper and new Integrated Care Systems 2022*, available at : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/health-and-social-care-integration-joining-up-care-for-people-places-and-populations>. Accessed on 23/03/22

¹³ Levelling Up the United Kingdom 2022, available at:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1052706/Levelling_Up_WP_HRES.pdf. Accessed on 23/03/22

people, 78% of them disadvantaged older homeowners¹⁴ the document is thin on specific action to address this critical issue, and there is no mention of any funding to tackle private sector housing disrepair (cut by 100% in 2010). The one proposed action concerning older people living in non-decent homes is to set up a Task Force looking at supply of alternative housing- however, whilst acknowledging that specialist and supported housing is a useful option for around 4% of older people, we know that 96% of older households live in ordinary, mainstream homes¹⁵, and a large majority of older people (80%+) are satisfied with and wish to continue to live in their current home and neighbourhood¹⁶. This can be made possible with a very modest level of practical help with repairs and adaptations, making homes safe, warm and supporting healthy, independent later life- we hope that the Task Force will look at the housing data and acknowledge this reality.

Housing and the Climate Emergency

The Climate Change Act, as amended in 2019¹⁷, commits the UK to 'net zero' by 2050. At the moment we do not think that the government focuses enough on the impact that poor quality homes can have on carbon emissions- 25m homes in England produce 58.5m tonnes of CO2 every year. In fact, homes in England produce more CO2 emissions than cars. The Government's Green Homes Grant Scheme was closed last year and there is currently no national scheme available to support people to reduce the carbon emissions from their homes. Unsurprisingly, the measures required to reduce the carbon emissions from homes and often the same measures required to address non- decent housing (insulation, boiler replacement, draft-proofing, retrofitting, securing doors and windows and addressing issues of disrepair). With this in mind we think that local HIAs should be funded to not only provide the housing services and information & advice that older people require to live safely and well at home, but also to ensure that their homes are equipped to support the aim of achieving net zero.

Care & Repair England are campaigning for minor adaptations and accessibility improvements to be made to housing that is included in retrofit programmes for climate change reasons, in order to produce homes that are 'decent' as well as reducing carbon emissions. We are represented on the Greater Manchester Retrofit Task Force.

2. What are the **existing local and national action plans, development plans and support programmes** for advancing the right to adequate housing for older persons? If available, please specify the budget allocated for their implementations.

Home Adaptations- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG):

All local authorities (County Councils, Unitary Authority and District/Borough Councils) have legal duties to help disabled people (of all ages) with home adaptations. Housing authorities must offer mandatory, means tested grants to help to meet the costs of essential home adaptations (DFGs) and Social Services must provide assistance with community equipment and minor adaptations (e.g. toilet frames, grab rails) as well as offering related information and advice. The national government funding towards DFG costs (which is paid to local authorities through the Better Care Fund) is currently £573 million for 2021-22, but is reducing to £530 million for 2022-

¹⁴ Garrett H, Burris S, (2015) Homes and ageing in England BRE Bracknell, IHS BRE Press

¹⁵ Garrett H, Burris S, (2015) Homes and ageing in England BRE Bracknell, IHS BRE Press

¹⁶ Lloyd, J. (2015), Older Owners Research London: Strategic Society Centre

¹⁷ The Climate Change Act (amended 2019), available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111187654>. Accessed on 23/03/22

23, 2023-24, 2024-25¹⁸. Whilst continuation of the DFG funding is welcomed, the reduction will result in a significant decrease in the number of people who can be helped given the rapidly rising costs of labour and materials, and increased need following the Covid19 pandemic, including the impact of Long Covid.

Decent Homes- Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs)

The Decent Homes Standard has been in place since the early 2000s and after decades of improvements and year-on-year decreases in the number of non-decent homes, the rate of improvement is stalling for all ages. In the case of households headed by someone aged over 75 years old, the trend has actually reversed and the number of non decent homes has risen from 533,000 in 2012 to 701,000 in 2017¹⁹. This age group are also disproportionately likely to be living in a non-decent home compared to younger age groups (more than 1 in 5 of over 75 year old households). As mentioned previously, in the last decade, due to cuts to national/local budgets we have also seen the closure and reduction of local Home Improvement Agencies and other housing services. We have also seen the complete withdrawal of grants to address housing disrepair amongst older home owners. In 1983-84 the national allocated funding for private-sector housing improvement and repair was £1.1 billion. By 2010-11 this was down to £317 million, and then ceased completely the following financial year. We are seeing the significant impact of this with the increase in non decent homes, especially amongst the older populations.

The [Good Homes Enquiry](#), commissioned by the Centre for Ageing Better²⁰, in its recommendations for improving the existing housing stock, recognises the importance of building on existing, effective practice and services and identifies Home Improvement Agencies and Care& Repair programmes as a key part of this.

The cost of poor housing to the NHS is 1.4 billion per annum, 61% of that is attributed to conditions related to excess cold; 31% as a result of potentially avoidable falls within the home; 2% to fires at home; and 6% to other factors²¹. This really highlights the link between poor housing and health, and how improving homes will bring significant health benefits to individuals, support the NHS Long Term Plan by preventing avoidable illness, and provide significant cost savings. .

Accessible Homes- London example

Currently, 91% of homes do not provide even the most basic accessibility features and it is estimated that over 400,000 wheelchair users are living in homes which are neither adapted nor accessible²². As mentioned in the previous question the current mandatory requirement in England is to build all new homes to a “visitable” standard. Through the Government’s *consultation*’ [Raising accessibility standards for new homes](#) we supported raising the mandatory standard to building all new homes to “accessible and adaptable” standards as well as committing to a minimal set percentage of wheelchair accessible new homes. In London there is already a requirement to build all new homes to accessible and adaptable standards, as well as 10% of all new homes being wheelchair accessible – we believe this approach should be rolled out to the rest of the country. In terms of learning from this London

¹⁸ People at the Heart of Care 2021, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>. Accessed ok: 23/03/22

¹⁹ Home and dry: The need for decent homes in later life 2020, Centre for Ageing Better and Care& Repair England.

²⁰ The Good Homes Inquiry 2021, The Centre for Ageing Better

²¹ Garrett H, Burriss S, (2015) Homes and ageing in England BRE Bracknell, IHS BRE Press

²² A Forecast for accessible homes 2020, Habinteg

model, there are some concerns around the requirement and accuracy of reporting the amount of new homes built to these standards and therefore we would like a mandatory standardised reporting system to be implemented if these standards are adopted nationally. The Government consultation closed in November 2020 and we are still awaiting the outcome of this- further delaying action will result in more homes being built that are harder to access for older and disabled residents now and in the future. Ultimately homes built to the lower standard are a false economy that will result in more expenditure on adaptations and social care down the line as well as creating barriers for disabled and older people to participate in and contribute to their communities; something that is not only costly, but counterintuitive to the levelling up agenda set out by the Government.

Covid Recovery Plans

Across the country, Local Authorities are developing Post Covid Recovery Plans. We believe that addressing the housing needs of older people should be a central part of every recovery plan. The link between housing and health is well-established, as is the association between older people and increased risk of living in non-decent housing conditions. Poor housing can cause or exacerbate risks from a wide range of common chronic health conditions, including respiratory illnesses, heart disease, stroke risk, depression. Housing conditions also impact on risk of injury and accidents, particularly falls amongst older people. These risks were exacerbated by periods of lockdown when people were confined to their homes for virtually the whole day apart from the one hour they were allowed to spend outside the home for exercise. Groups in the population who are over-represented in poor housing are often the same groups who are more vulnerable to COVID-19, including older people, people with existing health conditions, those with lower incomes and people from ethnic minority groups. Addressing housing inequalities is fundamental to our post covid recovery- the Housing Champion's Network and Care & Repair England are currently working with local authorities, other organisations and stakeholders to ensure this message is heard.

Retrofit Task Force and programmes

As mentioned previously, housing improvements and repairs are essential in reaching our aim of net zero carbon by 2050. Retrofit Task Forces have been established in many Local Authorities to look at how to retrofit homes on a mass scale to meet the need that is required to achieve this goal. The Housing Champion's Network and Care & Repair England believe that existing local Home Improvement Agencies are best placed to be funded and supported in carrying out the work required to retrofit existing homes to make them safe and decent. In the light of the solid data about non-decent homes, excess cold and falls hazards are the top reasons that homes fail the standard. Major health gains could be achieved if future major CO reduction housing retrofit schemes incorporated a 'Healthy Home' check with remedial measures undertaken at the same time e.g., to remove falls hazards, which are one of the major causes of hospital admissions for older people, and the majority of which cost a few hundred pounds to remedy compared to tens of thousands to improve thermal standards.

Age Friendly Cities

Many cities in England have committed to sign up to the World Health Organisation's

“Age Friendly Programme”²³ and become Age Friendly cities. The Housing Champion’s Network and Care & Repair England have been involved in the London, Manchester, Bristol and Leeds Age Friendly Programmes. Care & Repair England are the Housing Lead for the Housing Domain section of the Age Friendly London programme, and are currently working, as part of the London Age Friendly Forum (LAFF) with the Greater London Authority (GLA) to embed the Age Friendly Principles within the London Recovery Plan.

The Royal Town Planning Institute are producing guidance on Housing for Older People- the Older Peoples Housing Champion’s Network and Care & Repair England are currently making recommendations for this work.

3. How are **older persons involved and participating** in the development of action plans, policies or legislation related to housing?

Older people are all too often ignored or not encouraged to be involved in the development of plans, policy and legislation relating to housing decision making that impact their lives. The Older Peoples Housing Champion’s Network, supported by Care & Repair England is a great example of national network of older activists dedicated to representing older people’s views. Their aims are to raise awareness of the impact of poor and unsuitable housing on older people’s health and wellbeing, influence decision making and bring about improvements in policy and practice. In addition to this they aim to support other older people’s groups and forum get involved in local housing planning, policy and decision making- this includes influencing local housing strategies, developing Older People’s Housing Strategies, developing [resources](#) for other groups to use to influence local housing improvements- some examples of this can be found [here](#).

The Older Peoples Champion’s Network have developed a [Manifesto](#) which calls on the Government and all those responsible for planning and housing development to:

- Improve existing homes to make them healthy, safe, secure places to age
- Create universal access to impartial later life housing information, advice and advocacy
- Design/ Build all housing for all ages
- Plan and engage with older people
- Commit to these Seven Steps to Better Housing for Ageing (see the Manifesto)

The Older People’s Housing Champion’s are represented on the Greater Manchester Older People’s Network which recently produced guidance on designing Age-Friendly housing.

4. What **challenges, barriers and forms of discrimination** are faced by older persons in fulfilling their right to adequate housing? Please also include any existing legislation, policy or practice. Please also state how it impact older persons’ enjoyment of other human rights.

²³ World Health Organisation, Age Friendly Cities Framework. Available at: <https://extranet.who.int/agefriendlyworld/age-friendly-cities-framework/>. Accessed 23/03/22

Home adaptations.

Some of the most commonly reported barriers to accessing support for home adaptations are:

- *Lack of information* - about what adaptations are even possible, let alone the availability of financial assistance e.g. the DFG, or help to organise the building work.
- *Complicated and slow* - even when they find out about adaptations/DFG, many disabled people find the process of obtaining help very difficult to manage and there can be very long delays, sometimes running to many months, or even years.
- *Conflicting perspectives* - differences between what a disabled person wants and expects with regard to adaptations in their home vs the adaptation that the Occupational Therapist assesses as being 'necessary and appropriate' emerges as an area of considerable dispute in many cases.
- *Unsatisfactory building works* - Poor workmanship and delays in completion.

Handy person/ repairs and home maintenance support

The demise of many local HIAs and housing services due to a decade of cuts to local budgets and the worsening financial climate during the Covid19 Pandemic, has led to many older people being unable to maintain or repair their home. This has had significant impacts on health as well as living conditions. Since 2011 there has been no financial support for low income homeowners to maintain or repair their homes- we are now seeing the impact of this. The most recent in-depth analysis of the specific connections between non decent homes, ageing and health is the Centre for Ageing Better/ Care & Repair England report, '[Home & Dry: The need for decent homes in later life](#)' (2020)²⁴. This revealed that of the 4.3m non-decent homes in England, 2 million were lived in by older people, the majority of whom (78%) are owner occupiers. Older people, and low income older home owners in particular, are overrepresented in relation to living in non-decent homes and the presence of housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) Category 1 hazards and the vast majority of Category 1 hazards are related to excess cold and falls risk. The number of people age 75+ living in a non decent home has increased by 31% in 5 years, up from 533,000 in 2012 to 701,000 in 2017. Given the greatly increased impacts of COVID-19 with rising age, this is a particularly worrying trend.

Accessible Homes:

Our population is undergoing an age shift meaning that in less than 20 years, one in four of us will be over 65. There is an urgent need to build the kind of homes that will meet the changing needs of our ageing society – homes that are both accessible and adaptable. However, as it stands the mismatch between the homes we have, and the homes we need, is stark. Currently, 91% of homes do not provide even the most basic accessibility features and it is estimated that over 400,000 wheelchair users are living in homes which are neither adapted nor accessible. Not being able to leave, enter or move around in your own home easily has significant impacts on the way you are able to enjoy and live your life.

²⁴ Home and dry: The need for decent homes in later life 2020, Centre for Ageing Better and Care& Repair England.

Stereotyping- planning and policy around housing provision for older people.

When planning for homes to age well in, the conversation and decision making is usually focussed on specialist or supported housing. Whilst this is a useful option for a small minority, most older people wish to be in their existing home for as long as possible. We need to make sure there is a wide range of housing options that are accessible to older people and that this information is available so that people are able to make informed decisions regarding where and how they want to live. We also need to ensure there are practical housing services available to support people live safely and well in their homes for longer. These options need to reflect the diverse needs and wishes of older people and the conversation and subsequent planning & policy needs to move away from a one dimension approach which is both discriminatory and ageist in its impact.

5. How do **other factors** (i.e., gender, sex, race, ethnicity, indigenous identity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, religion, social status, place of origin and immigration status) intersect and impact the enjoyment of older persons' right to adequate housing?

Race

The report [Housing and the older ethnic minority population in England](#) (Nigel de Neronha 2019)²⁵ highlights these important facts:

- Higher rates of housing deprivation for Pakistani, Bangladeshi and black African older owner occupiers - possibly reflecting patterns of cumulative disadvantage caused by lower incomes that have restricted the ability of some to improve their housing conditions;
- Older people from black and minority ethnic communities have more difficulties accessing affordable housing;
- Black and minority ethnic groups aged 50 and over who do not own their homes are mainly accommodated in the private rented sector; and
- Older black and minority ethnic people are also more likely than other groups to experience 'housing deprivation' in the social rented sector.

Sexual orientation

Research conducted by Stonewall Housing, Opening Doors London and Tonic published in their, [Building Safe Choices report](#)²⁶ found that older LGBTQ+ communities wanted housing, care and support services that are safe; policy makers and providers to recognise their diversity and differences & more advice and support around housing and associated services. Relevant evidenced information in regards to LGBTQ+ older people and housing includes:

- Older LGBTQ+ adults are less likely to be married than their heterosexual peers, less likely to have children, and are more likely to live alone
- Older LGBT people are known to face a number of barriers when accessing services, these can include: discrimination, inappropriate questions and curiosity. These barriers can prevent fair equal treatment in health, housing and social care settings

²⁵ Nigel de Neronha, 2019, Housing and the Older ethnic minority population in England.

²⁶ Tonic, Stonewall Housing, Opening Doors London, 2020, Building Safe Choices

- LGBT individuals who are from ethnic minority communities or who have disabilities can face additional inequalities

Gender

The Women's Budget Group in their report, [A home of her own²⁷](#), found the following disparities:

- Older women have much lower pensions than men, a consequence of the gender pay gap and time out of the labour market due to caring responsibilities. Their capacity to afford their own homes are thus much lower than men of the same age group. The capacity of older women to afford to make adaptations and essential repairs is also less than that of men.
- Lesbian women in older age might be more dependent on residential care since they are less likely to have children and thus less able to rely on intergenerational informal care
- The gender pay gap for some groups of Black and Minority Ethnic women are even larger than for White British women. Women from Pakistani & Bangladeshi and Black African backgrounds have particularly lower earnings, so for them housing affordability is an aggravated issue. Social security cuts have also impacted low-income BME women the hardest, exacerbating their difficulty in affording an adequate home

Location

The report by the Northern Housing Consortium, [The Hidden Costs of Poor Quality Housing in the North](#) (2019)²⁸ highlights that sub-standard private housing is a major problem in the North of England, yet the issue is overlooked and rarely discussed. The issue is wide spread and is a particularly urgent concern for many older homeowners. Nearly 1m owner-occupied homes in the North now fail to meet the decent homes standard in addition to 354,000 private rented homes. This is also a national problem, but worse in the North where there are concentrations of pre-war, low value properties, many a legacy of the industrial revolution. Nearly half of all non-decent homes in the North have at least one person with a long-term illness or disability – well above the England average.

As the older population becomes more diverse, it becomes ever more important that strategic housing and planning leads, housing providers, and designers and architects, take an intersectional approach and consider the housing needs, challenges and aspirations of all older people, and people who will be reaching later life in the coming years.

6. What impact has had **the COVID-19 pandemic** on older persons' right to adequate housing in your country (e.g., has the pandemic caused any policy shift away from institutions and more emphasis on community supports)? What measures have been taken to minimize its impact?

²⁷ Womens Budget Group, 2019, A Home of her own report

²⁸ Northern Housing Consortium, The Hidden Costs of Poor Quality Housing in the North 2019

Care & Repair England have published a [report²⁹](#) which focusses on the impact that Covid19 has had on the housing, health and well being of older people in England. The report states that even before the COVID-19 pandemic, a high proportion of older people were already dealing with significant health challenges, including living with multiple long term health conditions, facing increased risks of acute episodes e.g., stroke, heart attack, injury from falls etc., experiencing a range of mental health challenges, and/or living with daily living difficulties and persistent pain as they waited for elective surgery e.g., cataract, hip and knee operations. The emerging evidence with regard to the health impacts of the pandemic on older people is that there has been widespread exacerbation of existing physical and mental health conditions, as well as emergence of new health problems for previously well individuals.

COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on certain population groups, in particular older people, those with long term health conditions, and some black and minority ethnic populations, with overlaps between these groups. The disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 in certain regions, local authority areas and localities, especially in the North of England and the Midlands have also been evident. The central importance of the home as a place of safety and sanctuary has been reinforced, and conversely substandard, insecure, overcrowded and unhealthy homes have increased the impacts of COVID-19 on their occupants

7. What **alternative housing strategies for older persons**, other than care homes and state institutions, exist in your country? What policies/programmes are in place to enable older persons to live independently in their communities as they age? Please provide detailed information.
8. What are the **new and sustainable housing strategies** for older persons considering the current concerns of the impacts of climate change?

Retrofit Task Forces have been established in many Local Authorities to look at how to retrofit homes on a mass scale to meet the need that is required to achieve this goal. The Housing Champion's Network and Care & Repair England believe that existing local Home Improvement Agencies are best placed to be funded and supported in carrying out the work required to retrofit existing homes to make them decent and more accessible. In the light of the solid data about non-decent homes and mentioned previously, excess cold and falls hazards are the top reasons that homes fail the standard. Major health gains could be achieved if future carbon reduction housing retrofit projects incorporated a 'Healthy Home' check with remedial measures undertaken at the same time e.g., to remove falls hazards, the majority of which cost a few hundred pounds to remedy compared with tens of thousands to improve thermal standards.

9. How does **the State fulfil its obligations** to ensure older persons' access justice, and to obtain remedies and reparations, when their right to adequate housing have been violated?
10. What are the **lessons learned** from advocacy, legal, and policy actions undertaken to combat ageism and to access of adequate and affordable housing by older persons?
11. **Data:**
 - a. Does your country collect data on older persons' living conditions in your country? If yes, please provide any available and disaggregated figures and statistics (e.g., number

²⁹ Care & Repair England 2021, Making homes fit for ageing: the consequences of covid19 for the housing, health and wellbeing of older people in England.

of older persons: in institutions, living alone, living with family, or living in urban and rural areas).

The English Housing Survey³⁰ is a continuous national survey commissioned by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC). It collects information about people's housing circumstances and the condition and energy efficiency of housing in England.

The Building Research Establishment (BRE) has done in-depth analysis using the English Housing Survey data on the health and safety hazards in the home. They calculated the following statistics in regards to older people and housing in England:

- 96% of older households live in mainstream homes
- There are 2.5 million long term sick or disabled people over 65yrs
- The estimated costs of poor housing to the NHS is £1.4 billion per annum (61% excess cold ; 31% falls ; 2% fires ; 6% other factors).
- Most older people are owner occupiers (76% owner occupiers ; 18% social rented ; 6% private rented).
- 2 million older households live in non-decent homes, most are owner occupiers (78%)³¹

Further analysis of this data can be found in Care & Repair England's report "[Home and Dry](#)".

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) data³² reveals that 3.8 million individuals over the age of 65 live alone, 58% of whom are over 75 (around 2.2 million individuals) (ONS, 2017a). Also that older women are more likely than older men to live alone (ONS, 2018)

Urban & Rural Environments

Age UK in their report, *Later Life in the United Kingdom*³³, reveal that:

- Populations in rural areas tend to have a higher proportion of older people than urban areas (DEFRA, 2018b).
- 55% of people living in rural areas are aged over 45, whereas in urban areas this is 40% (DEFRA, 2018b).
- The population aged 65 and over increased by 37% in rural areas between 2001 and 2015, and increased by 17% in urban areas (DEFRA, 2018a).
- 41% of people living in rural areas do not have access to their nearest hospital within an hour's travel by public transport or walking, compared with 6% of users living in urban areas (Gov.uk, 2016).

- b. Is data on older persons broken-down into groups of different ages over 65 years to plan and address each specific age group's needs in terms of housing?

³⁰ The English Housing Survey, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

³¹ Building Research Establishment, Helen Garrett and Selina Burris, Homes and Ageing in England. Available at: https://www.bre.co.uk/filelibrary/Briefing%20papers/86749-BRE_briefing-paper-PHE-England-A4-v3.pdf.

Accessed 23/03/22

³² Office for National Statistics, 2017/18, available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/>. Accessed 23/03/22

³³ Age UK, Later life in the United Kingdom 2019

English Housing Survey³⁴ data for over 65 years is broken into two different age groups: 65- 75 and 75+

ONS data for over 65 years is broken into the following: 65-69; 70- 74; 75- 79; 80- 84; 85- 89; 90+

12. Please outline **any other areas** that you would like to bring to the attention of the Independent Expert in the context of the right to adequate housing of older persons. Please feel free to share any document, report, study, publication already available and that might be of interest to the mandate.

We will use this question to provide more information about Care& Repair England and the Older Peoples Housing Champion's Network.

[Care & Repair England](#) is a national charitable organisation which believes that all older people should be able to live independently and well in their own homes for as long as they choose. We know that many older people need practical help with home repairs and adaptations and so one of our aims is to increase the availability of local, practical housing services that can make living in a decent home possible for everyone.

- Our special focus is on older people living in poor or unsuitable homes which they own
- We promote provision of practical housing services that can improve health, wellbeing and independence
- We work with, and not just for, older people
- We seek to improve housing and related policy and practice by working with older people themselves to influence change.

The Older Peoples Housing Champion's Network

The Older Peoples Housing Champion's Network is a national network of older activists who support action by older people's groups to improve housing and related services for an ageing population across England. Care & Repair England set up the national Older People's Housing Champion's Network to:

- raise awareness of the scale and nature of the impact of poor and unsuitable housing on older people's health and wellbeing
- influence decision making and bring about improvements in policy & practice. Local Champions share practice and keep an eye on the ground in their areas on housing and ageing issues, help to co-ordinate and stimulate local action and act as a source of local intelligence. Care & Repair England offers local Champions support on this.

The Older Peoples Housing Champion's Network have launched their own Manifesto, and with the support of Care& Repair England have produced several resources which older people's group and forums can use to get involved in and influence improvement in local and national housing policy.

³⁴ The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, English Housing Survey, available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/english-housing-survey>. Accessed 23/03/22