

**CONCISE REPORTING FORMAT FOR SUB GROUPS TO OLDER PEOPLE
PARTNERSHIP BOARD**

- Sub Group: Bucks Chief Housing Officers Group
- Date of OPPB Meeting: 14 September 2006
- Reporting Lead: Martin Holt
- Specific Questions Raised by OPPB for Sub-Group?

Overview of the support offered by the District Housing Strategies

- Specific Questions for OPPB Raised by Sub-Group

Report on the local housing strategies to identify the specific housing needs of people over 50 to help them remain in their own homes.

Housing and Older People - Background

There is a wide range of housing for older people within Bucks reflecting the housing demand. Accommodation and tenure is equally varied with; owner occupiers, private or social renting tenants housed in 1 and 2 bed properties or larger and often more rurally isolated properties.

House condition

Many of the issues faced by older persons may relate to being cash poor asset rich and under-occupying properties as the families have fled the nest. Local house condition surveys identify that the private rented and the elderly owner occupied homes are most likely to be in poor condition and the least energy efficient, resulting in fuel poverty.

Nationally there are 30,000 excess winter deaths and an increasing number from heat stress. Additionally poorly heated homes are contributory factors to heart disease, strokes and delayed recovery from hospitalisation.

The housing fitness standard has recently been adjusted to make excessive cold (poorly insulated homes) the highest priority for improvement within the home. This is also backed up and supported by the range of grants, discounts and schemes to encourage insulation measures.

The demand for disability adaptations is across all tenures and whilst in some districts the landlord housing association or council is responsible for the provision in socially rented properties, this is not always the case. Older persons in at least two districts (Chiltern and South Bucks) are required to apply for disabled facilities grants irrespective of tenure.

Housing provision

Within Buckinghamshire there is above average provision of sheltered housing (3700 sheltered housing dwellings) and this is increasingly used by older persons than previously. People are now typically entering sheltered housing in their mid 70's rather than mid 60's. Of these about 1 in 6 of sheltered housing residents already receives a homecare service from Adult Social Care on average 4.75 hours per week.

Sheltered housing is becoming less popular and may be increasingly become no longer 'fit for purpose' as accommodation for an older (and frailer) group of applicants. Additionally bedsits or poorly located dwellings are no longer seen as lettable by residents or landlords. Waiting lists (which tend to significantly overstate real demand) for the four largest sheltered providers are low, supporting the view that it is an increasing less popular form of housing.

The recent Bucks Supported Housing Needs survey has identified 560 new extra care dwellings required over the next 20 years. Extra care housing being seen as *an increasingly popular choice for older people, offering a real alternative to residential care, whilst enabling people to remain as independent as possible. Extra Care housing offers: self contained accommodation (usually one or two bedrooms); residents a choice of their own tenancy, or to become owner/occupiers, shared owners, or leaseholders; and access to 24 hour care on site (flexible care packages according to need).*

The forecast is that between 2005 and 2025 the population over 65 in Buckinghamshire will grow from 73,800 to 100,200; a **36% increase** in just 20 years. The older elderly group, those over 80, is expected to **double** from 18,088 to 37,500.

This increase is putting additional pressures on the housing market to address their needs. Some of these needs will be taken up by persons choosing to live in the family home, but increasingly there will be a demand for good quality retirement housing and extra care for sale or rent which is currently not much above the average UK levels.

How do the County and Districts support housing for older people?

At a Strategic level

The needs of older people are considered through the District Housing Strategies. These strategies building on the research undertaken by the Districts in the form of Housing Needs and Housing Market Surveys and the County in research on the level of need for supported housing.

These are then linked to the Planning processes for the provision of available land for housing. Apart from Aylesbury (Growth Area) and Wycombe there are few available sites. The AONB and Green Belt being a significant limiting factor on land availability for housing.

Each of the Districts Housing Strategies have priority areas for older peoples housing, for example in Chiltern District, older persons housing falls within the priority of **“To ensure that adequate housing and support services are provided for persons with support needs”**.

However this priority has to be balanced against the overall housing need in Chiltern the Housing Needs Survey (updated 2004) identified an annual shortfall of 421 affordable housing dwellings across all households, including older people

Similar overall housing needs can be seen in the other districts.

Wycombe DC is undertaking a review of its sheltered housing. They have commissioned Peter Fletcher Associates to undertake this piece of work with interim findings being available at the end of September. This report and the analysis of known issues in terms of stock condition and demand generally will be used to shape and inform decisions on the future scope for sheltered housing in Wycombe.

District	Total numbers of Affordable housing/year (Housing Need Surveys)	Affordable houses delivered 2006/7	Homelessness Acceptances In 2006/7	Weeks in temporary Housing In 2006/7
CDC	421	46	124	2.23 weeks
WDC	1236	291	141	47.19 weeks
AVDC	1077	124	59	40 weeks
SBDC	350	23	26	0

Supporting new provision

Provision of any new affordable housing (for general needs or older people) is dependent on the availability of land and subsidy.

District Councils have a strategic role in delivering new affordable housing which increasingly requires working with differing partners; RSL (Registered Social Landlord), developers, and possibly in the future Special Purpose Vehicles to deliver housing on land owned by Statutory Agencies. In Buckinghamshire very little land is owned by the statutory agencies.

The scarcity of land and subsidy means that District Councils need to prioritise what new schemes are needed and where (e.g. should general needs schemes be prioritised ahead of older persons housing)?

Over the last 5 or 6 years, Chiltern DC has supported Paradigm in delivering two new sheltered schemes in Prestwood (Cherry Orchard) and Chesham (Abbey Court) to replace old schemes that were no longer suitable for clients.

Aylesbury Vale is working in conjunction with McIntyre and Stone to develop a mixed tenure development for older people. This will remain a private scheme and the Council will not have any nomination rights.

Our housing stock was transferred to the Vale of Aylesbury Housing Trust in 2006. They are currently working with the County Council on a planning and viability study to develop a current sheltered scheme to a 63+ sheltered/extracare facility.

A similar number of new developments and refurbishments of existing sheltered housing and extra care schemes have occurred in Wycombe, Aylesbury and South Bucks

Supported housing

The provision of new supported housing faces the same issues of land availability and capital funding, but in addition there are the longer term issues of funding the care and housing support.

The District and County work in partnership to support the development of care and support strategies in Bucks, most notably the Supporting People Strategy (which includes services for older people). Supporting People services can be provided in the home or in specialist accommodation such as a hostel, refuge or sheltered housing. The kinds of support provided will include:

- help with claiming benefits and organising to pay rent and other bills;
- making sure you are safe in your home;
- support with essential life skills, such as shopping, cooking and basic hygiene; and
- support to access a range of appropriate other services, for example, social activities, education and training.

It does not include:

- home-care workers, who help with things like getting washed and dressed; or
- meals on wheels.

Planning

As planning authorities, the District Councils, can directly influence what can be built and where. This impacts on the provision of new build schemes for older people in both the social sector (e.g. RSLs) and the private sector (e.g. specialist providers such as McCarthy and Stone. New schemes must conform to local planning policy if they are to go ahead.

Current regional planning policies require the following total provision of housing in each of the districts

District	Number/annum
AVDC	1060
CDC	120
SBDC	90
WDC	330

The limited growth still doesn't tackle the growing needs for housing.

Supporting older people remain in their own home

In line with current aspirations the main form of accommodation of older people is to remain in the family home. Whilst there are initiatives to support and encourage older persons to consider moving to more suitable accommodation these presently have little impact. Some RSLs have 'move on' schemes to support tenants downsizing and Anchor Trust will assist those seeking home repairs or adaptations in considering options and support the move on process to a more suitable property.

In supporting older people to look after their own homes and ensure their continued accessibility a range of initiatives are being delivered by partner agencies. These include

- Benefits advice
- Housing advice
- Disabled Facilities Grants
- BCC Aids and Adaptations
- Cocoon and WarmFront Insulation schemes
- Southern Bucks Safer Homes
- Anchor Staying Put and AVDC Staying Put (Home Improvement Agencies)
- Help the Aged Handyvan
- Voluntary Gardening Scheme
- Call alarm systems (– range of providers charitable to local authority)
- Choice Based Lettings (to be delivered in 2008/9)

Benefits advice

Advice from a range of service providers including Pensions Service, Bucks County Council, Districts and the voluntary sector including the local citizens Advice Service and Age Concern. The services include outreach, GP surgery advice, telephone and office based services. In Chiltern alone the CAB dealt with 17000 clients, supported debt recovery of £2.87M, assisted 4185 persons to access benefits and prevented 193 people from becoming homeless.

Housing Advice

Provided by the District Councils, often in partnership with a range of providers for example the Citizens Advice Bureau, Home Improvement Agency, and Housing Associations. The type of advice varies between; homelessness, harassment, house conditions, disabled adaptations, heating and insulation, benefits advice, fire safety, landlord and tenant issues, renting in the private sector etc

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

District Councils directly administer Disabled Facilities Grants to provide adaptations in the home e.g. stair lifts, vertical lifts, bathroom and kitchen alterations, fixed ramps, widening doors, dropped curbs, central heating, reinforced ceilings etc. In 2006/07

District	DFGs completed 2006/7
AVDC	34
CDC	48
SBDC	47
WDC	62

Buckinghamshire County Council Minor Adaptations/Aids for daily living

Buckinghamshire County Council Social Services will consider applications for handrails, alterations to steps, semi permanent ramps, electric hoists and tracks, proprietary shower units, etc. Decisions over the availability of minor adaptations are closely linked to the delivery of DFGs.

Cocoon and WarmFront Insulation schemes

Countywide provision of assistance to access insulation and heating upgrades, the scheme is linked to the LAA Fuel Poverty target in 2006/7 delivering 1783 improvements. An Affordable Warmth Co-ordinator, works county wide to raise awareness of insulation schemes.

Southern Bucks Safer Homes

Small repairs scheme designed to carry out minor repairs. Charges are £10/hr plus VAT and the cost of materials. The work can include fitting of shelves, curtain rail, replacing tiles, handrails, tap washers etc. the scheme also supports the fitting of security measures, smoke detectors and key safes. The service also undertakes a ROSPA audit and refers cases to various agencies for assistance. In 2006/7 the service delivered over 400 improvements

Anchor Staying Put and AVDC Staying Put (Home Improvement Agencies)

Assists older disabled and vulnerable persons carry out repairs and/or adaptations to their property enabling residents to stay at home. The agency supports the individual access a range of finance and supports the person through the building process. Assistance is provided to access drawings, specifications, building trades, and contract overseeing. In 2006/7 the Aylesbury Vale Staying Put Service and Southern Buckinghamshire Anchor scheme supported 304 residents with improvements

Help the Aged Handyvan

Operates in Aylesbury and across Southern Buckinghamshire providing free locks and security and smoke alarms to people aged over 60 and on low incomes. In 2006/7 both schemes provided over 300 people with support.

Voluntary Gardening Scheme

Operates across the county from the local volunteering bureau and takes referrals from social services as to those in most need access gardening support.

Choice Based Lettings (to be delivered in 2008/9)

2008 will see the introduction of Choice Based lettings and a major change in the way social housing tenant's access homes in Buckinghamshire. Currently, households who want a Council

or RSL (Registered Social Landlords) property have to apply to go onto the local Council's Housing Register and wait for an offer of accommodation.

Choice Based Lettings will change this by giving applicants on the Register more choice about where they live. Instead of waiting for an offer, applicants will have the chance to see details of all available vacancies and decide which homes they want to put themselves forward for.

Applicants will still be prioritised based on their level of housing needs, but the current complex points system for assessing priority will be replaced by a simpler banding system (where applicants are placed into different bandings (groups) depending on their housing need).

While Choice Based Lettings will not increase the overall number of dwellings that are available, it will mean that applicants have a much greater say in where they move to (rather than simply waiting for an offer of accommodation).

Applicants will have a better idea of how long they are likely to have to wait to be re-housed and the scheme will also provide links to other housing options including private renting and home ownership schemes.

Choice Based Letting schemes already operate successfully in a number of local authorities across the United Kingdom and the Government wishes to see all authorities introducing schemes by 2010.

All the District Councils are working in partnership with their partners RSLs e.g. Paradigm Housing, to introduce Choice Based Lettings

Better use of Existing Housing

The better use of the existing housing provision is a key requirement to support the housing needs of local people as the new build will not be sufficient to deal with demand.

The Districts have in place scheme to return empty homes to use by

- maximising the payments of second homes council tax
- supporting and facilitating home owners to sell or rent their properties
- provide private rent deposit schemes enabling residents to access a wider housing choice
- enforcement powers to return empty homes to use
- support the development of move on schemes enabling people to downsize
- encourage householders to let rooms to others e.g. key workers

Future Proposals

Much of the delivery of the housing services is undertaken in partnership between the District, County, Housing Associations and the voluntary sector. The next 3-5years will see greater partnership working in order to maximise the benefits of the housing growth, supporting people funding, homelessness prevention and the delivery of decent homes in the private sector.

Plans are currently being developed that will see

- A single housing strategy based on the district strategies for Buckinghamshire
- Choice based lettings
- Wider range of financial options for persons seeking to invest in their own home
- Greater options for move on or renting in the private sector
- Improved delivery times for disabled facilities grants and aids and adaptations
- Increase floating support to those in housing need assisting them to maintain tenancies

- Increased availability of call alarm systems and telecare for vulnerable persons living in their own home.

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