

Darlington Borough Council
Older Persons' Housing Strategy 2007

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Section One

Introduction

‘Effective Housing, allied to the right care and support and wider services, can be the springboard that enables older people to remain involved and live their lives to the full. Conversely, poor housing can be a fetter to older people, contributing to immobility and social exclusion, ill health and depression’ – (ODPM/DOH Quality and Choice for Older People’s Housing 2001)

Nationally, the age structure of the population is currently undergoing rapid and fundamental changes. In recent years, the increase in life expectancy amongst older adults has increased dramatically. Between 1981 and 2002 life expectancy at age 50 increased by four and a half years for men and three years for women. For those aged 65 and over the extra years of life were three and two years respectively. Projections suggest that these will increase again by 2020, and there are currently more people aged over 80 than ever before¹.

The ageing population presents a challenge in terms of housing policy, impacting directly on the provision of decent, affordable and appropriate housing for older people. As people become frailer due to age related conditions, particular housing issues arise and the physical and location characteristics of their home, coupled with the interface with care and support services available to them become more important.

Research carried out by the Office for National Statistics suggests that older people are less likely to report problems with their housing, particularly in the private sector, possibly due to not knowing what assistance is available to alleviate these problems. Despite this, the research highlighted that 12% of older people said that their homes were too cold in winter. Older people are also more likely to live in older housing and suffer the consequences of cold and damp through fuel poverty and non-decent housing conditions. The number of people without central heating also increases with age. In 2001, 93% of older people in Britain aged between 50 and 64 had central heating, compared to only 86% of those aged 85 and over².

Among households that include older owner-occupiers, some are more likely than others to live in non-decent housing.³ Research has shown that housing is more likely to be below standard where:

- Households contain someone aged 75 and above: or
- Households comprise people aged over 60 living alone, and where people have been living in the same property for over 30 years

There is now also increased social mobility with many people moving away from their place of birth and the dissolution of the traditional extended family. For this reason it is expected that in future there will be a shortage of family carers, and there will be an increased need for a range of diverse support services for older people.

¹ Office of National Statistics (ONS) 2004 – www.statistics.gov.uk

² Office of National Statistics (2004) *Focus on Older People*, available to download online at http://www.statistics.gov.uk/downloads/theme_compendia/foop/Olderpeople.pdf

³ DWP (2005) *Opportunity Age: opportunity and security throughout life, vol.2*, available to download online at http://www.dwp.gov.uk/opportunity_age/section_two.asp

Recent social care and health policy directives advocate a shift towards promoting independence and in providing care and support services 'close to home' as opposed to 'institutional' solutions. More support should be given to older people to allow them to remain in their own homes for as long as they wish, providing them with more choice and control over their own lives and empowering them to remain self dependent.

The Older Persons' Housing Strategy sets out how the Council and its partners will work closely alongside stakeholders and older people themselves to influence and deliver improvements to the quality and choice of housing across all tenures within the Borough for older residents.

Our aim is to understand the main housing and support issues facing our older community and seek to meet their aspirations through the development of new policies and initiatives. This will be achieved through close partnership working with agencies like Supporting People, Adult Services, Darlington Primary Care Trust and Age Concern. The strategy will also consider how services can be developed in order to allow older people to remain independent. For some, this may mean the provision of support to enable them to stay in their own homes; for others, ensuring that the right kind of specialised housing, providing additional support and care is available to them.

Planning for future housing provision will also play a major role in ensuring that accommodation appropriate to older people's needs is available. Wherever possible we will endeavour to ensure that the principles of 'Lifetime Homes' are incorporated into any future housing provision to meet the needs of the ageing population in the longer term. The 'Lifetime Homes' concept was developed in the 1990's and considers the accessibility of dwellings for households throughout all stages in life. New building regulations introduced in 1999 stipulate that all newly built properties should take into consideration the 16 design features as set out in the 'Lifetime Homes' concept⁴, that will add flexibility and make homes easy to adapt to people's life changes. The new specification is such that dwellings will remain appropriate to changing needs over time and should reduce the amount spent on Disabled Facilities Grants, used to adapt properties to make them more accessible and reduce the likelihood of older people having to move to alternative accommodation to meet their needs and potentially losing the supportive social and care networks they have established.

The Council recognises, however, that the needs and aspirations of older people are diverse and that they seek to have choice in their lives and control over what happens to them. It is for this reason that the involvement of older people will form the core of the development and monitoring of this strategy.

⁴ Details of the 16 design features incorporated into Lifetime Homes are detailed in appendix one

Section Two

National Context

The Older Persons' Housing Strategy has been driven at a national level by a wide range of key policy developments, which are summarised below.

'**Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing – A Strategic Framework**' was developed jointly by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) and the Department of Health (DoH) in 2001. This highlighted the Government's commitment to the importance of good quality and appropriate housing in the lives of older people and acknowledges the significance of the interaction of health, housing, care and support services both at local and Central Government policy level. It provided a national context for action in the provision of housing and support for older people.

The Quality and Choice report set out two objectives, which must be addressed by all those working with older people in order to maintain the momentum for decent, affordable and appropriate housing for this group

- **First** – *to ensure older people are able to secure and sustain their independence in a home appropriate to their circumstances; and*
- **Secondly** – *to support older people to make active and informed choices about their accommodation by providing access to appropriate housing and support services through advice on suitable local services and options*

The two objectives can be achieved at a local level by addressing each of the integral elements. The report also emphasises that any action taken by local authorities should be:

- **Integrated** – working across all sectors, tiers and departments in a joined-up way and in partnership
- **Holistic** – addressing the whole spectrum of older people's needs – both immediate requirements, intermediate respite provision and planning to meet future needs
- **Inclusive** – Providing equitable, affordable and accessible services for older people, regardless of housing need, social status, disability or ethnic origins
- **Involving** – Providing an opportunity for older people to influence and contribute to the development and improvement of existing older persons' services and the shaping and procurement of new services
- **Preventative** – Providing a safe and secure living environment in which older people can continue to live independently

'Quality and Choice' identifies five key areas for new policy and service development:

Diversity and Choice – ensuring the provision of services, which promote independence and are responsive to older people's needs and preferences

Information and Advice – ensuring that information and advice are accessible both to professionals and older people themselves on a variety of housing options/support available

Flexible Service Provision – assisting local authorities and service providers to review housing and service models to improve flexibility to meet changing needs, taking into account the views of older people

Quality – emphasising the importance of the quality of housing and support services, both in terms of ensuring homes are warm, safe and secure and in monitoring the services provided

Joint Working – improving the integration of services delivered at the local level by housing, social services and health authorities and nationally through Government departments

Department of Health White Paper – Our Health, our care, our say: a new direction for community services (2005)

Published on 30th January 2005 this White paper aims to improve community health and social care services in England. Underpinning this objective are 4 key aims

- Better prevention for improved health and well-being
- Giving people greater choice and control over the care they receive
- Providing rapid and convenient access to high quality, cost effective care closer to home; and
- Support for people with long-term conditions

National Service Framework for Older People (2001)

Published by the Department of Health, this 10 year programme for action aims to ensure fair, high quality and integrated social care services for older people, promoting cultural changes so that all older people could be treated with respect, dignity and fairness.

The main aims of the strategy are

- Assuring standards of care
- Extending access to service
- Ensuring fairer funding
- Developing service that promote independence
- Helping older people to stay healthy

- Developing more effective links between health and social services and other services such as housing, and partners in the voluntary and private sectors.

Supporting People Framework (2003)

Supporting People was introduced in April 2003 and provides a new way of funding 'low-level housing related support', allowing vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life. Providing support for older people within their home environment can allow them to retain their independence and can alleviate the need for more institutional care. Nationally, funding for Supporting People has only slightly increased in the face of increasing demands on support services. For this reason, existing services need to be as efficient and cost effective as possible.

A Sure Start to Older Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People (2006)

Published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in collaboration with the Department of Health (DoH) and Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), this report considers how poor quality, inappropriate housing and lack of support can have a detrimental effect on the lives of older people, leading to dependency, reduced self-esteem and social exclusion. It suggests that there are 5 key issues in relation to housing that need to be tackled:

- **Access to information** – ensuring that older people have greater access to clear and understandable information on their housing and support options
- **Maintenance and Repair of Existing Home** – ensuring that older people are aware of and able to access assistance that can be provided in terms of adaptations and energy efficiency measures, enabling them to remain in their own homes.
- **Housing Options** – Information should be provided to older people to ensure that once they have information about the options open to them, they also have a real choice in housing. This could mean remaining in their own home or moving to accommodation where more support is available, such as sheltered or 'extra care' housing.
- **Joining Up** – Making sure that all agencies involved in the provision of services to older people work more effectively together to achieve better outcomes, raise the quality of services and achieve greater value for money
- **Prevention** – Using low-level support, Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs), financial assistance such as disabled facilities grants and home improvement assistance, and assistive technology to ensure that the home provides a safe and secure environment for older people, maintaining self sufficiency with limited support and sustained independent or semi- independent living.

Housing Corporation Strategy for Older People (2002)

This sets out the Housing Corporations vision to “provide a range of housing and related services that give older people the housing they prefer at a cost that suits their financial circumstances, improves their quality of life, enables them to be both independent and inter-dependent and promotes social inclusion”

Decent Homes Standard

There is a national commitment to achieve the Decent Homes Standard in all social housing by 2010. According to Government guidelines published in 2004 and updated in 2006⁵, a decent home is one which;

- Meets the current statutory minimum standard for housing
- Is in a reasonable state of repair
- Has reasonably modern facilities and services
- Provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort (related to insulation and heating efficiency)

It is widely recognised that poor quality housing can have an impact on the health and well being of its occupants, leaving them at risk of becoming excluded from the social and economic life of our community. The Acheson enquiry into health inequalities highlighted the links between poor quality accommodation and increased risk of accidents and illnesses such as asthma and hypothermia (this risk being exacerbated by fuel poverty)⁶. Older people are particularly at risk from non-decent housing and so this is of particular importance.

According to the 2001 English House Condition Survey, only 57% of vulnerable people living in the private sector in England lived in a home that would be classified as decent; 25.9% of all private sector properties in the North East were identified as potentially failing the Decent Homes Standard⁷. Failure to provide an adequate degree of thermal comfort was, and remains⁸, the main reason for dwellings failing to meet the standard.

As part of the Government’s 2002 spending review (SR2002) it was agreed that a target would be set to increase the number of decent properties within the private sector number to 65% by 2006, 70% by 2010 and 75% by 2020⁹. Key Groups, which local authorities will consider vulnerable include older people.

⁵ Department for Communities and Local Government: *A Decent Home: Definition and Guidance for Implementation June 2006 Update*

⁶ Independent Inquiry into Inequalities in Health Report – Sir Donald Acheson 1998

⁷ A report into the English House Conditions Survey 2001 is available from the Department for Communities and Local Government website at <http://www.communities.gov.uk/>

⁸ English House Conditions Survey Headline Report 2004 available to download from <http://www.communities.gov.uk>

⁹ This element of the target will be measured through the continuous English House Condition Survey. The baseline, set at 1 April 2001, is 57% of vulnerable households in the private sector live in a decent home. The proportion measured is derived from the number of private sector vulnerable households in decent homes divided by the number of all private sector vulnerable households

Housing Health and Safety Rating System

The Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS), a new risk assessment procedure for residential properties was introduced in April 2006 and replaced the Housing Fitness Regime. Previously, assessments were 'property based' and did not directly consider the effect a risk could possibly have on an occupant or visitor. The new system takes into account the possible effect that a risk could have on the most vulnerable person likely to inhabit or visit the property.

The HHSRS assesses twenty nine categories of housing hazard and these are then graded due to severity. Although any possible hazards can pose a risk to people of any age group, five are considered as a particular risk to those aged over 60 and three to those aged over 65.

Risks to those aged over 60

- Falls associated with baths, showers or similar amenities
- Falls on level surfaces (including trip steps, thresholds or ramps)
- Falls on stairs or steps
- Fire
- Position and operability of amenities (threats of physical strain due to reaching or bending to use amenities)

Risks to those aged over 65

- Excessive cold
- Excessive heat
- Carbon monoxide and fuel combustion poisoning

The possibility of these hazards occurring within a residential property of any tenure will be taken into account when considering the health and safety.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) 1995 and 2005

The DDA sets out the minimum standards to be achieved to ensure the accessibility of people who exhibit mobility difficulties for residential dwellings and office facilities. This includes level access entrances and exits, clear signage and enlarged doorways to allow wheelchair access.

Section Three

Local Context

There are a number of recent policy developments at a local level that will drive the Older Persons' Housing Strategy.

Community Strategy

The Older Persons' Housing Strategy supports and further progresses the four visionary goals of the Darlington Community Strategy, in particular the aims of providing **'a place for living safely and well'** and **'a high quality environment with excellent communication links'** through targeted interventions aimed at improving housing and support provision for older people.

Private Sector Housing Strategy

The Private Sector Housing Strategy, published in 2006 sets out how the Council aims to tackle housing conditions within the private sector in line with current legislation. This includes rented and owner-occupied properties, in order to improve the lives of our most vulnerable residents, including older people. A stock condition survey covering properties of all tenures within the Borough is being commissioned for 2007 and will highlight areas of non-decent housing and form the basis for further action.

A new financial assistance policy was developed in line with the Private Sector Housing Strategy. This comes in the light of changes in the way local authorities can offer assistance due to the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order (England and Wales) 2002. The Council is now able to offer a range of loan assistance to homeowners and landlords to improve conditions within private sector housing.

The physical improvement of dwelling conditions, through financial assistance will play a major role in ensuring that older people are able to remain in their own properties in line with Government recommendations. The Financial Assistance Policy allows applications from those people who may be asset rich but cash poor by allowing loans to be offered and recovered only at the point at which the property is disposed of, which gives peace of mind to many older people who find themselves in this situation

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are also available for those living in private sector accommodation. DFGs are given towards the cost of providing adaptations or facilities to enable a disabled person to continue living in a property such as

- Facilitating access to the property
- Making a dwelling or building safe
- To provide a room useable for sleeping
- To facilitate access to WC or bathing facilities
- To facilitate the preparation and cooking of food

- Heating, lighting and power
- Adaptations to common parts of a dwelling

In order to apply for a DFG an assessment must be made by an Occupational Therapist and then a recommendation made to the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Care and Repair Darlington. All clients will then be handled through a waiting list system. The Council successfully secured additional Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP) funding from Government Office North East (GONE) for the two-year period 2006-2008. This has allowed more people with disabilities or long-term illnesses to remain in their homes or facilitated an early discharge from care. Applications for Disabled Facilities Grants do include a high proportion of older people who naturally become less mobile over time. We are examining alternative joint procurement options locally and with our Tees Valley Local Authority partners to achieve better value for money services on a “tenure blind” basis. The Housing Capital Programme also includes a substantial budget for adaptations to the Council’s housing stock.

Supporting People Strategy (2004-2009)

The vision for the Supporting People Strategy, published in 2004 was “To offer vulnerable people in Darlington the opportunity to improve their life by providing a choice of well planned, high quality, reliable housing related support services, which will allow them to live more independently in the Borough”. The main objectives of the strategy are reflective of those set out in Government guidelines, promoting independence through the provision of needs led, cost effective, inclusive support services that promote independence and alleviate crisis.

Careful consideration is given in the strategy to older people with support needs, including frail older people and those with mental health issues. Although there is a wide range of services available for older people in Darlington certain gaps in service were identified. The strategy highlighted that there is greater need for diversification in the types of services provided for the older client group but that also there is a significant under-provision in services, particularly in relation to

- Faith and Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) community groups
- Frail elderly people
- Older people with mental health problems

As part of the Older Person’s Housing Strategy we will aim to consider the current supply of housing and related support for older people across all tenures, being mindful of the strategic objectives of the Supporting People Strategy and the outcome and recommendations of any service reviews.

Further consideration will be given to the needs of the BME community through consultation on housing and support needs. This will enable us to consider how BME needs differ to those dealt with through the provision of mainstream services. Research will be carried out to the current supply/demand ratio for extra care housing for frail elderly people and those with dementia to identify whether provision needs to be increased to meet the needs of these groups. We will also identify whether there is a need to reconfigure current services to better meet the requirements of older people, both now and in the future.

All Together Now: A Social Inclusion Strategy for Darlington 2005

The Social Inclusion Strategy aims to improve the life chances of those who are experiencing and those at risk of experiencing discrimination and disadvantage. The strategy concentrates on the risk of social exclusion to those aged over 85. Although statistics show that all age groups over 60 are increasing and are expected to continue to do so, the numbers of those aged over 85 are increasing most rapidly¹⁰. According to a report produced by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2005¹¹ there are seven key characteristics that are most strongly related to an older person experiencing multiple exclusion:

- Being aged 80 or over
- Family type: living alone, having no immediate or close family for support
- Health: poor mental or physical health
- Mobility: no access to private car and never uses public transport
- Housing tenure: rented accommodation
- Income: low income, benefits as the main source of income
- Telephone: those without access to a telephone

The study also highlighted that there are likely to be links between the different forms of exclusion and that older people with multiple exclusions are likely to report feeling a lack of control over their lives.

Poor quality housing and lack of support most certainly have a detrimental effect on the health and well-being of older people and can lead to social exclusion. The Older Persons Housing Strategy will influence and deliver quality and choice in housing of all tenures and develop support services. Future housing development will consider the needs of older people and be based around good transport links, giving increased opportunity for mobility. Each of these aspects have a positive effect on the lives of our older residents, giving them more choice, independence and control over their own lives and lessening the risk of social exclusion. Indeed the concept and model of accommodation offered by extra care brings support and other essential services to the doorstep of all older people by incorporating them within extra care schemes.

¹⁰ Further information on population projections for Darlington is available on page 13

¹¹ The Social Exclusion of Older People: Evidence from the First Wave of the English Longitudinal Study of Ageing (ELSA) 2006

Section Four

Darlington Statistics

The Older Person's Strategy has been developed with key demographic changes in mind, which will influence the development of housing and support services for older people within the Borough.

Age

The resident population of Darlington as measured at the 2001 Census was 97,480. The ODPM 2003-based population projections for the period 2003-2021 indicate that the UK population is expected to increase, with the most marked increase among those aged 60-74 (38.7%) and those aged 75+ (28.4%).

Mid 2005 estimates¹² by the ONS show that of a population of 99,177, there were 18,500 people of retirement age and over¹³. Research carried out by the Tees Valley Joint Strategy Unit (JSU) in 2005 (based on 2003 figures) as shown at Table 1 indicates that by 2021, the number of those aged 60 and over in Darlington will have increased by 29.4% from 21,780 in 2003 to 28,190 in 2021

Table 1: Population Projections for Darlington 2003-2021

Age Group	Year					% Change
	2003	2006	2011	2016	2021	
0-14	18,290	18,170	17,730	17,650	17,010	-7%
15-24	11,160	12,240	11,750	10,640	10,270	- 8%
25-39	19,270	18,680	17,810	17,950	18,020	- 8.6%
40-59	27,290	28,310	28,530	27,750	25,780	- 5.5%
60-74	13,680	14,400	16,310	17,180	18,300	+ 33.8%
75-84	6,150	6,130	6,140	6,680	7,330	+ 19.2%
85+	1,950	1,840	2,030	2,250	2,560	+ 31.3%
Total	98,240	99,770	100,300	100,100	99,270	

This marked projected increase in Darlington's older population will have significant implications on housing provision. To consider these implications, further consideration of current and future provision and projected need is required.

¹² The mid-2005 ONS estimates are the most up to date official figures and are normally rounded up to the nearest hundred

¹³ Retirement age – Females 60 years and males 65 years

Household Composition

Table 2 provides information about household composition for older people taken from census data for 2001. This is indicative of the high number of single pensioner households within the Borough.

Table 2: Household Composition of Older People In Darlington - 2001

Household Composition	Number
Single pensioner	6638
Pensioner Couple	7647
Pensioner (other)	366

Older people living alone are more likely to be vulnerable and experience social exclusion than those living as part of a couple. For this reason there is likely to be an increased need for practical home support amongst this group to enable them to remain at home if they so wish.

Table 3 details housing tenure for older people in Darlington as per the 2001 census.

Table 3: Housing Tenure of Older People - 2001

Housing Tenure	Number	% of Total
All households where the household reference person is of pensionable age	12482	
Owner occupied	8536	68.4%
Rented from Council	2556	20.5%
Other social rented	778	6.2%
Private rented or living rent free	612	4.9%

This information shows that the majority of older people in Darlington own their own properties. The Private Sector Stock Condition survey completed in 2000 illustrated 5.9% of private sector stock as unfit with 1% of the identified unfit properties as unoccupied. There are four main central wards exhibiting the highest concentrations of unfit properties being North Road, Bank Top, Central and Northgate. The Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) "ready reckoner" concludes that in Darlington there are 369 vulnerable households in non decent homes. However, inward investment from the regional Single Housing Investment Programme (SHIP), and, the introduction of the new loans based Financial Assistance Policy is doing much to address private sector unfit. The introduction of a Landlords Accreditation scheme with an increasing membership, is also helping to raise and maintain standards.

Many older people have low incomes prohibiting the extent to which they are able to finance essential household repairs or improvements thus threatening their independence.

The new Financial Assistance Policy is designed with this in mind, and, is aimed at providing assistance to those on low incomes, the most vulnerable people and targeted in areas of poorest housing condition. The Financial Assistance Policy provides flexible affordable lending and a range of assistance packages tailored to meet customers' needs. The Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency acts as an agent for customers, procuring, managing and monitoring the quality of all improvement works from start to finish through commissioning works only through approved contractors.

A new Private Sector Stock Condition survey will be commissioned in 2007 which will inform future strategic priorities and help evaluate the effectiveness of current policies to further improve private sector decency.

Income

Data from August 2005 from the ONS shows that there were 5440 older people in Darlington claiming pension credits.

Table 4: Older People Claiming Pension Credits

Age of Claimant	Number	% of Total
Claimants ages 60-69	1710	31.4%
Claimants aged 70-79	1810	33.3%
Claimants aged 80 and over	1920	35.3%
Total	5440	100%

This data shows that there is a significant number of older people within Darlington who are eligible for pension credits and therefore on a low income. It is interesting to note that the number of claimants increases by age group, with the highest number of claimants being those aged over 80. It is the older age groups who experience frailty and are likely to require adaptations and assistance with their properties in order to enable them to remain living there. The data highlights that many older people would not have the financial resources to be able to carry out adaptations, repairs and maintenance to their homes and would require some form of financial assistance.

Section Five

Current Housing and Support Provision

There is currently a wide range of housing and support options available for older people in Darlington and these are detailed below.

Council Housing and Support Schemes

There are over 5500 properties in the Council's overall housing stock and 1945 (35%) of these have someone aged over 65 as the main or only tenant. In terms of Council housing for older people, there are a range of options for specialised housing with support available.

Sheltered Housing

The Council has 22 sheltered housing schemes around the Borough with a total of 856 single and double flats. These are divided into Sheltered Housing, Good Neighbour Sheltered properties and Extra Care Sites

- **Sheltered Housing**

Where all properties are under the same roof yet all are individual flats with a lounge, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. All schemes have communal lounges for social activities together with gardens, guest rooms, laundry, as well as security and safety features plus services such as information and advice surgeries. All schemes have a dedicated Warden most of whom live within the scheme. Each property is also linked to the Control Centre, Lifeline system ensuring there is a 24-hour emergency assistance, including a mobile response, even when the warden is not on duty. The schemes offer the opportunity for low-level support whilst older people maintain their independence within their own home.

- **Good Neighbour Sheltered**

These are individual flats and bungalows all in the same area or complex. They offer a good community spirit, neighbours of a similar age group and your own external door. Most schemes have a communal lounge for social activities together with gardens, security and safety features. All schemes have a dedicated Warden, some of whom live at the scheme. Each property is also linked to the Control Centre, Lifeline system ensuring there is a 24-hour emergency assistance, even when the warden is not on duty.

- **'Extra Care' Schemes**

Extra Care provides housing for individuals who require greater assistance with personal care. There is 24-hour support from a care team within each site. The schemes are aimed at people aged over 50 who are identified through assessment as having a care need. All individual flats have special features such as flat floor showers and provide high quality accommodation adapted to wheelchair standard.

These sites also have:

- On site care team
- An on site lunchtime catering team
- Kitchen and Dining room
- Hair Salon
- Health and exercise room
- Health and beauty room

The Council is also working in partnership with Hanover Housing Association on the provision of extra care accommodation. Rosemary Court is due for completion in September 2007 and will provide 42 units of accommodation; 24 refurbished one bedroom flats (adapted to wheelchair standard), 4 intermediate care, or respite flats aimed at helping older people to regain their independence after moving from hospital, or to prevent a move to hospital, and 14 flats (owned by Hanover Housing), specifically aimed at older people with dementia. In addition to the Council's 3 Extra Care schemes we also have nomination rights to Mayflower Court, an extra care scheme provided by Hanover Housing.

- **Warden Call Service**

There are currently 721 older people living in council accommodation linked to the 24-hour mobile warden service who provide an emergency response. The warden call service also provides emergency response and monitoring to 371 housing association properties within the borough.

- **Lifeline Service**

The 'Lifeline' Service is available to all older residents or those with disabilities, regardless of tenure for a small weekly charge. A portable alarm is supplied, which is linked to the telephone and can be pressed in case of emergency, linking the older person to a control centre operative who will have details of relatives, neighbours, friends or doctors who will be contacted and the mobile warden emergency response service. The service allows older people, especially those living alone, more security and independence in their own home. 700 older people within the borough are currently linked to the Lifeline service.

- **Home Support Scheme**

The service is delivered to Older People with Support Needs. It can be provided to householders who own their home or live in rented accommodation. A team within Adult Services assess whether a person is eligible to receive the service. The service can be provided in addition to other social care packages or can be a stand-alone service.

The scheme has 68 units and provides 3 hours of support per week. The aim of the scheme is to sustain the independence of the service users and to help them with living skills.

Examples of the sort of support provided are:

- Housework – including enabling and motivating to clean the home appropriately.
- Supporting individuals to shop , encourage and advise on how to live within their budget.
- Provide advice on how to use the appliances in their home safely.
- Enabling the service user to understand the terms of their tenancy.
- Enabling the service user to keep to the conditions of their tenancy.
- Provide advice and support on how to maintain the security of their home.

- Provide advice and assistance to service user in relation to organising repairs to their home.
- Supporting individuals to engage in social activities.
- Support with laundry tasks.
- Support with paying bills

- **Capital Investment Programme**

Integral to the implementation of all improvement works is consultation with residents to ensure that they have a role in the design process and, older people are well represented on the Tenants Board (one of the key consultative bodies for the Council).

The Council's annual Housing Capital Investment Programme provides valuable investment to a number of improvement projects benefiting older people. These include decent standard work such as internal planned maintenance and the replacement of internal fixtures and fittings, improved heating and lighting in communal areas of sheltered schemes, improvements to assisted bathing facilities and improvements to entrances and exits to meet Disability Discrimination Act criteria. The Council has also reviewed in consultation with its tenants, a number of sheltered schemes and blocks of flats not meeting modern expectations. The conclusion to this work has seen a number of sheltered schemes and blocks of flats remodelled to improve living space, disabled access and increased personal privacy.

With an increasingly aged population there is a need to invest in adaptations to help older people remain as independent as possible within their own homes. The Council continues to invest in the provision of disabled facilities grants with £700k and £330k being invested in private and public sector housing per annum respectively. The provision of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service is, however, being reviewed in the light of the Department of Communities and Local Government consultation paper published in January 2007. The DFG service is exploring joint procurement opportunities both locally and sub-regionally, exploring longer term contractual arrangements, and, working towards a "tenure blind" common service. It is anticipated that the outcome of the review will deliver higher quality services, achieve better value for money and allow more older people to benefit from the service.

- **Assistive Technology Pilot Scheme**

A pilot scheme is currently in progress to test the benefit of assistive technology in supporting older people to remain independent at home. Several types of device are being tested.

- **bed sensors**, which allow people to get out of bed during the night but activate an alarm call if the person has not returned within an allotted time in case of a fall.
- **fall detectors**, which attach to the person's waistband and which activate an alarm call if the person falls.
- **property exit alerts**, which will activate an alarm call if the person leaves their property after a designated time at night. This technology will be most appropriate for those suffering from dementia.

The scheme is currently in its pilot stage and the new technology has been provided to 20 older people, some living in sheltered housing, others, their own homes linked to a Lifeline telephone. If the scheme proves successful it is envisaged that the use of assistive technology will be extended.

- **Get Everyone Motivated (GEM)**

GEM is a fitness scheme whereby older people living in sheltered accommodation and the surrounding area are encouraged to get involved in gentle exercise and creative activities in order to increase fitness, health and social interaction.

- **Darlington Active Independent Staying Young (DAISY)**

The DAISY scheme, organised by the Council's Warden Services department, runs during the summer months within sheltered schemes and offers free events and activities such as live entertainment quizzes and dancing to those aged 50 and over in Darlington. These events also provide the opportunity for older people to seek advice on a wide range of issues, such as housing, adaptations, health and leisure from other older persons' services who also attend the events

Other Support Services

There are a number of other support services available to older people in Darlington and these are summarised below

- **Growing Older Living in Darlington (GOLD)**

GOLD is a community group for those aged over 50 in Darlington, which promotes a positive and active future for older people within the community.

- **Home Improvement Agency Care and Repair Darlington**

Established in 2003 by the Council and operated by Three Rivers Housing Group, Care and Repair Darlington is a not for profit, Home Improvement Agency (HIA). They help older, vulnerable and disabled owner/occupiers and private tenants on a low income to remain independent, safe and secure in their own homes through help with adaptations, repairs and maintenance. Care and Repair are administrators of the Council's financial assistance programme, including Disabled Facilities Grants.

- **Handyperson Scheme**

The scheme is run by Care and Repair Darlington and jointly funded by Darlington Borough Council and Darlington Primary Care Trust. The service offers assistance with small-scale repairs and adaptations for Darlington residents who are aged over 60 or disabled. Materials for works are charged at cost price and there is a charge of £5 per hour, unless the older person is in receipt of a means-tested benefit, in which case there is no hourly charge. The scheme is cost effective, offers value for money, quick and efficient service delivery and uses multi-skilled trades people rather than individual trades people for each specific type of work.

- **Tees Valley Energy Efficiency Scheme**

The Tees Valley Local Authorities including, Darlington have jointly procured energy efficiency services for vulnerable local people. The scheme represents a public investment of £100k with private investment expected to be in the region of £200k giving a total investment of £300k between 2006-2008. The service will be managed by an independent body called the Tees and Durham Energy Advice Centre (TADEA).

The scheme is targeted at the most vulnerable including the elderly who are often those in greatest fuel poverty, providing discounted energy efficiency improvements such as cavity wall insulation, boiler lagging, draught proofing, and loft insulation. The scheme operates on the basis of means testing, the extent to which energy efficiency measures will enhance energy ratings of properties and “ability to pay”. The scheme also allows financial assistance to those in greatest financial hardship who are otherwise unable to meet any cost differentials between the total cost of measures and available discounts allowed.

Consultation with Older Residents

The Council recognises that the needs and aspirations of older people are of great importance and undertakes consultation with older residents on a number of issues to ensure that they have an active part in service development.

Any major works to be carried out within the Council’s sheltered housing schemes are considered by the Sheltered Housing Task and Finish Group which is a sub-group of the Tenants Board and is made up of residents of sheltered housing, for consultation. A number of major developments have arisen through consultation with the task and finish group over the past twelve months:

- Residents have been invited to submit ideas to inform the improvement plan for communal areas within sheltered housing schemes.
- Residents now play an active role in deciding the colour schemes and soft furnishings etc to be used in any redecoration schemes.
- Consultation was undertaken with residents on whether to ban smoking in communal areas. This was supported and the ban came into effect in January 2007.
- The Task and Finish Group recommended that the Warden Call System be extended to include certain properties not in sheltered blocks, but covered by the mobile warden system.
- The Group recommended that smoke alarms for individual flats sound in the warden’s office but do not active the main block alarm.
- Copies of the window cleaning and building schedule are now available for all residents in the communal areas for them to inspect and feedback any issues. This has resulted in changes to the window cleaning procedure and additional cleaning as appropriate.

The Annual Housing Capital Programme is presented to the Tenants Board for approval and comment prior to full implementation. Feedback from capital works programmes are regularly monitored and customer views are captured through sample tenant satisfaction surveys and reported through Key Performance Indicators.

Older people will play a key role in the implementation and monitoring of this strategy and further consultation with older people using existing networks such as GOLD and the Tenants Board will help inform our understanding and appreciation of the main housing issues and priorities facing older people in the future.

Section Six

Future Housing and Support Needs

The rising number of older people in Darlington presents a number of associated issues. The challenge for the Council is to develop a range of housing and support services, which will provide real quality and choice for older people.

Any future housing provision will need to take into account the needs of older people. As people age and mortality rates decrease, it would seem reasonable to expect that the number of single older households will increase, leading to an enhanced need for single person housing provision and support services. It is also reasonable to expect that the number of people with dementia in Darlington will rise as the older population increases and that there will be more older people from the BME community.

We therefore need to consider the diverse range of needs experienced by older people, as well as the individual choices, preferences and aspirations of older people themselves. The Council commissioned a Housing Needs Survey within the Borough, which was completed by David Cumberland Housing Regeneration Ltd in 2006. This highlighted that over the next 5 years there is expected to be a gross annual shortfall of 265 general needs properties. Of these 27 one bedroom properties and 113 two bedroom properties for older people are highlighted as a requirement¹⁴. This information has been incorporated into the Council's Supplementary Planning document and will guide any future planning decision for affordable housing provision within the Borough. Future housing provision will also take into account the principles of 'Lifetime Homes', 'secure by design' and the needs of older people for mobility to reduce the risks of social exclusion.

Consultation carried out as part of the Local Housing Assessment shows that the majority of older people questioned would prefer to remain independent in their own homes, with support services provided should they need them. Table 5 shows the housing options being considered by older people in Darlington within the next 5 years

Table 5: Housing Preferences of Older People

Housing Option	%*
Continue to live in current home with support	80.7
Sheltered accommodation	26.0
Residential Care Home/ Extra Care Scheme	4.8
Buying a retirement apartment	13.9
Buying a property in retirement village	12.2
Total responses	24,516

*Percentages don't add up to 100 as more than one option was considered

¹⁴ Darlington Local Housing Assessment Report 2005 (2006) – David Cumberland Housing Regeneration Ltd

Household surveys carried out as part of the Local Housing Assessment asked what assistance householders felt they needed at the present time or within the next 5 years. The report suggests that there is a strong correlation with the need for assistance by age.

Table 6: Type of Assistance Required in the Home

Assistance required	When required		Total Requirement	As % of all households (base 44,624)
	Now	Likely to need within next 5 years		
Assistance with repairs/maintenance of home	3034	4549	7582	17.0
Assistance with gardening	3123	4140	7263	16.3
Help with cleaning home	2168	3215	5383	12.1
Help with other practical tasks (e.g. collecting prescriptions)	1458	2258	3716	8.3
Personal care	1013	1628	2641	5.9
Company/friendship	894	1082	1976	4.4
Social alarm (to call for help)	824	2037	2861	6.4

The above information identifies that there is a high need for assistance in the home for many people, both in the immediate and longer-term future. The greatest support need is for assistance with repairs and maintenance within the home. This indicates that there will be increasing demand upon the existing Handyperson and garden tidy schemes and consideration is being given therefore to maximising the capacity of existing schemes and exploring new initiatives such as using the Groundwork Trust.

The survey also suggests that there is a need for expansion and greater coverage of the warden call service for older people who remain in their own homes but would like the safety and security of knowing that assistance is available should it be required. The 'Lifeline' service currently promotes the service it provides but better targeting to those living within the private sector needs further consideration.

There is also a need to further promote the home care and support services, to meet the needs of a number of the respondents mentioned in the survey in terms of personal care and help with other practical tasks such as collecting prescriptions.

Social contact was an issue highlighted in the survey. This is particularly an issue for older people who live alone and have mobility problems, preventing them from travelling far to access social and community activities. Lack of interaction with others is one of the main causes of social exclusion and depression amongst older people and so further consideration is needed on the provision of social activities amongst older people.

Research as part of the Supporting People Strategy highlighted certain gaps in service and we must consider how these service needs can be met in light of the limited Supporting People grant available.

Research carried out by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation into the housing needs and aspirations of older people identified the following key factors for consideration¹⁵

- Most older people do not require specialist accommodation
- Movement within general housing stock is highly likely and not just moves into sheltered stock
- A need for space does not necessarily decrease with age
- Older people need improved access to amenities and transport
- A feeling of safety in the home is important

In conclusion, it is evident from this information that certain actions need to be put in place to respond to these identified needs.

¹⁵*Needs and Aspirations of Older People Living in General Housing* Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2002

Section Seven

Areas for Action

It is evident that a growing older population in Darlington necessitates consideration of housing and support needs, both in the near and longer term future. Priorities for action in housing and support for older people have been grouped under the five key areas for new policy and service development as set out in *Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing: A Strategic Framework*.

Diversity and Choice

Older people should have the opportunity to be able to exercise choice over where they live and the services they receive. Providing improved access to information and advice will empower older people to make informed decisions about where they choose to live in all sectors.

Therefore we will:

- Carry out further consultation with older people on their housing needs and aspirations
- Carry out consultation with the BME communities to ensure that cultural issues are taken into account when providing housing and related services
- Review the quality and choice of the Council's sheltered housing and extra care schemes and implement a programme of improvement through the capital investment programme
- Work in partnership with older people on the implementation of this strategy
- Assess the impact of current policies on local older people.

Information and Advice

Effective information and advice about housing options and the type of support services available to older people empowers them to make informed choices about their futures; whether to move or remain at home. Advice and information is critical to the prevention agenda.

Therefore we will:

- Ensure that information on Choice Based Lettings is available to older people through surgeries held in community centres and sheltered housing schemes and through 'information points'
- Promote financial assistance and energy efficiency schemes for older people through GOLD and public notice.
- Actively contribute to a directory of support services for older people by updating the appropriate sections in the Better Care Higher Standards Directory.

Flexible Service Provision

Older people's housing need will change along with their circumstances. Many older people wish to remain in their own homes, whilst others may wish to move into sheltered or extra care accommodation where more intensive support is available. Older people's housing should focus on enabling older people to live safely and securely in their own homes as part of the wider community. Services should be flexible to respond to the changing needs of older people.

Therefore we will:

- Review the range of Warden Services available to maintain their quality and value for money.
- Ensure that older people's needs are taken into account when planning any future housing provision
- Ensure that older people are at the centre of the planning and delivery of new older accommodation and the associated support services.

Quality

The provision of a good quality housing and related service is essential to the health and well-being of older people. Quality in this context refers to both the physical quality of the housing and the mechanisms by which quality standards of service can be enhanced across a range of provision of support and care.

Therefore we will:

- Provide a range of grant assistance to low income, older owner-occupiers and private renters as part of the Council's new Private Sector Housing Strategy
- Maximise the use of 'assistive technology' to help assisted living and maximise service outputs
- Promote the use of disabled facilities grants and the disabled adaptations scheme to enable older people to remain in their own homes
- Support the development of low-level support schemes to enable older people to live independently in their own homes
- Achieve affordable warmth and tackle fuel poverty by investing in energy efficiency improvements and energy advice

Joint Working

Joined up working between all agencies involved in the housing, care and support of older people is essential to achieving successful outcomes in policy development.

Therefore we will:

- Work in partnership with housing associations to improve the quality and choice of housing for older people within the social rented sector
- Work with a broad range of partners including Housing Services, Adult Services, Supporting People, the Primary Care Trust and Age Concern in the development of new services for older people to ensure that key areas for development are identified to meet the needs of our older community

Older Persons' Housing Strategy Action Plan

Diversity and Choice				
Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead
Carry out consultation with older people about their housing needs and aspirations	Consultation exercise to be carried out through GOLD	Jun 2007	From existing resources.	Lesley Compson, GOLD.
Carry out consultation to find out culturally specific housing support needs and current gaps in provision	<p>Consultation to be carried out with SP Core Strategy Group regarding the Housing Support needs of BME community groups within Darlington</p> <p>Meet with older persons groups through existing older persons forums</p> <p>Report progress to existing older persons forums on progress with Older Persons Housing Strategy.</p>	<p>Jun 2007</p> <p>Bi-annually.</p> <p>Annually.</p>	From existing resources.	Denise Rudkin
Maximisation of Communal facilities and respite care provision in sheltered housing schemes to promote social inclusion lifelong learning and healthy lifestyles	Work with partners such as GOLD, Help the Aged, Adult Services, Catering and Leisure Services.	On-going	From existing resources	Jill Walton

Information and Advice				
Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead
Review the literature and information available for older people	<p>Ensure leaflets and information are up to date, accessible and easy to read.</p> <p>Ensure the Council's web site includes a wide range of relevant information.</p>	Aug 2007	From existing resources	Alan Glew
Ensure that information on Choice Based Lettings is available and accessible to older people	<p>Introduce Tees Valley Choice Based Lettings by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal period of consultation with key stakeholders • Review feedback and seek approval • Implementation 	<p>Jul 2007</p> <p>Sept 2007</p> <p>Mar 2008</p>	25k	Hazel Neasham
Promote financial assistance policy to ensure uptake amongst older people	Review and assess "take up" of Financial Assistance.	Annually.	£1.2M SHIP 2006-08.	Alan Glew.

Promote energy efficiency scheme to older people to ensure uptake	Ensure that the proportion of older people accessing the service is reflective of proportion of older person population.	On-going	£300k SHIP funding 2006-08 and private investment.	Alan Glew
Provide a range of grant assistance to low income, older owner-occupiers and private renters as part of the Council's new Private Sector Housing Strategy	Ensure that the proportion of older people accessing the service is reflective of proportion of older person population.	Apr 2008.	£1.2M SHIP funding 2006-08	Lynda Westland, Care and Repair.

Flexible Service Provision				
Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead
Work in partnership with the Supporting People Team in reviewing the range of warden services available.	Establish group	Apr 2007	Within existing Supporting People resources	Anthony Sandys.
	Complete Review	Dec 2007		
Consider older people's needs when planning any future housing provision or improvements	Ensure older people are able to influence design specifications for older person housing.	On-going	From within existing resources.	Alan Glew.

Joint Working				
Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead
Undertake review of Extra Care Housing	Identify benefits and further areas of good practice	Mar 2008	From existing resources	Hazel Neasham
	Develop implementation Plan	Mar 2009		
Contribute to the development of the Older Persons Strategy	Older Persons Strategy completed	During 2007/08	From existing Resources.	Alan Glew
Maximise use of existing social rented housing as part of introduction of Choice Based Lettings	Introduce CBL scheme together with other Tees Valley housing providers	Mar 2008	From existing resources.	Hazel Neasham
Work with a broad range of statutory and voluntary sector partners in the monitoring of the Older Persons' Housing Strategy.	Monitor and assess performance against key strategic targets	Initial review Apr 2008.	From existing resources.	Alan Glew.

Quality				
Action	Milestones	Target Date	Resources	Lead
Review of the condition of sheltered housing currently available	Include as part of overall Housing Stock Condition Survey in 2007.	Jan 2008	£75k	Alan Glew
Implement and expand the use of 'assistive technology' to help support independent living and maximise effectiveness and efficiency of services	Evaluation of pilot scheme. Expansion of assistive technology service.	Apr 2007 Apr 2008	Department of Health Preventative Technology Grant; 2006-08 £156,669.	Lynn Carter.
To review and assess the implications of the DCLG Consultation paper on Disabled Facilities Grants.	Respond to the consultation paper. Review the existing working practices and procedures in respect of the Disabled Facilities Grant service "tenure blind". Confirm recommendations for policy change.	Apr 2007 Apr 2008 Apr 2009	From existing resources.	Alan Glew.
To explore and investigate joint procurement opportunities for Disabled Facilities Grants with Tees Valley partners.	Agree common specification standards for common adaptations. Undertake "value for money" appraisals. Tender for new longer term contracts.	Dec 2007 Mar 2008 Apr 2008	From existing resources.	Alan Glew.
Identify and target "difficult to reach" older people and ensure the Disabled Facilities Grants service is accessible.	Analyse the customer profile for older people accessing the Disabled Facilities Grant service and identify under represented older people.	Apr 2009	From existing resources.	Alan Glew.
Review the current Home Support Service for older people.	Review commenced.	Sept 2007	£113k Supporting People Funding per annum.	Anthony Sandys.
Achieve affordable warmth and tackle fuel poverty by investing in energy efficiency improvements and energy advice	Reduce fuel poverty to the elderly and increase thermal comfort through raising SAP ratings. Maximise the number of energy efficiency measures installed and those households benefiting from energy efficiency improvements.	Mar 2008	£300k 2006-08	June Phoenix, TADEA.

Appendix One – Lifetime Homes Standard

The 16 design features as incorporated into housing developments designed to the ‘Lifetime Homes Standard’ are detailed below

1.	Car Parking Where a car park is adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3.3m width	9.	Two or More Storey Requirements In houses of two or more storeys there should be a space on the entrance level that could be used as a convenient bed space
2.	Access from Car Parking The distance from the car parking space to the home should be minimal and should be level or gently sloping	10.	WCs In houses with three bedrooms or more there should be a wheelchair accessible toilet at entrance level with drainage provision enabling a shower to be fitted in the future.
3.	Approach The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping	11.	Bathrooms and WCs Walls in the bathroom and WC should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails
4.	External Entrances All entrances should be illuminated, have level access over the threshold and a covered main entrance	12.	Lift Capability The design should incorporate provision for a future stairlift and a suitably identified space for a through floor lift from ground to first floor
5.	Communal Stairs Communal stairs should provide easy access and, where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully accessible	13.	Main Bedroom The design and specification should provide a reasonable route for a potential hoist from the main bedroom to the bathroom
6.	Doorways and Hallways The width of internal doorways and hallways should conform to Part M (of building regulations), in that they should be wheelchair accessible	14.	Bathroom Layout The bathroom should be designed for ease of access to the bath, WC and wash basin
7.	Wheelchair Accessibility There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and living rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchairs elsewhere	15.	Window Specification Living room window glazing should begin no higher than 800mm from the floor so that windows are easy to open
8.	Living Room The living room should be at entrance level	16.	Fixtures and Fittings Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be at a height usable by all