

## **Age Friendly Research, housing and cities: A UK perspective**

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## **Outline of presentation**

- 1. Policy background:
  - a. Ageing
  - b. Housing and the built environment
  - c. Age Friendly Cities
- 2. Some recent and current research
  - a. General
  - b. Housing
  - c. Age Friendly Cities

### **1. Policy background: a. Ageing**

- Traditionally the policy area for the Ministry dealing with Pensions and Benefits (was called Department of Health and Social Security, then Department of Social Security and now Department of Work and Pensions).
- How important is terminology?

### **1. Policy background: a. Ageing**

- How important is terminology? i.e. note the major policy papers in the UK
  - 1978 A Happier Old Age
  - 1981 Growing Older
  - 1998 Building a Better Britain for Older People
  - 2005 Opportunity Age
  - 2005 Building a Society for all ages
  - 2006 A Sure Start for Later Life
  - 2008 Preparing for an Ageing Society
  - 2009 Building a Society for all ages: Choice for older people (discussion document followed by later in 2009 summary of responses)

### **1. Policy background: b. Housing and the built environment**

- Numerous Ministries involved over the years with constant changes of names and responsibilities e.g. Ministry of Health, Ministry of Housing, Ministry of Housing and Local Government, Department of the Environment, Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Department of Communities and Local Government
- Policies until very recently focussed on housing rather than on broader issues of the built environment (despite the names e.g. DOE)

### **Policy background: b. Housing and the built environment**

- DCLG, which has responsibilities for housing, communities and neighbourhoods, local government, cities and planning produced a White Paper in 2006 'Strong and prosperous communities'. One of the main aims was to promote community cohesion.

## **Policy background: b. Housing and the built environment**

- Some attempt to link housing to other strategies i.e.
  - 1995 DH/DOE Housing and Community Care; Establishing a Strategic Framework
  - 2001 DTLR/DH Quality and Choice for Older People's housing
  - 2002 ODPM Quality and Choice for Older People's Housing: A Strategic Framework
  - 2004 ODPM Preparing Older People's Strategies: Linking housing to health, social care and other local strategies

## **1. Policy background b. Housing and the built environment**

- Most of the general government documents are very general and only have some limited references to the built environment. Very little on wider issues until 'Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' 2008, Department for Communities and Local Government/DH/DWP
- The major policy and practice gap has been marrying up the policies of housing, health and social care (but see now Chartered Institute of Housing Sarah Davis et al, Dec 2009, 'Housing, Health and Care'). This contains useful case studies

## **Policy background b. Housing and the built environment**

- Themes of policy have been:
  - Stress on remaining at home
  - Stress on owner occupation
  - Emphasis on specialised, i.e. sheltered housing, being one option only (but in government statements the emphasis has been on extra care housing and its advantages)
  - Emphasis on the role of technology (however it is described)
  - The problems of poor housing and importance of housing adaptations and home improvement agencies. More resources needed here

## **1. Policy background c. Age Friendly Cities**

- 'Lifetime homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods' 2008 Department for Communities and Local Government/ Department of Health/Department of Work and Pensions was one of the first attempts by the Government to address wider issues of the environment.
- Involvement in the WHO Age Friendly Cities project but very low key

## **2. Some recent and current research: a. General**

- Focus on:
  - Inequalities
  - Social exclusion
  - Social inclusion
  - Well being
  - Dignity
  - The involvement of consumers

## **2. Some recent and current research: b. Housing**

- Dominated by extra care housing
- Government's enthusiasm for innovations rather than the mundane and ordinary
- The role of assistive technology (including the first randomised control trial (Whole Systems Demonstrators in 4 areas with 6191 participants)
- Much research on a diverse wide range of topics to be discussed this week.
- Own most recent research is 'Remodelling sheltered housing and residential care homes to extra care housing'.

### **Remodelling sheltered housing and residential care homes to extra care housing**

- Examined how a sample of 10 sheltered housing and residential care homes had been remodelled to extra care housing
- Audited buildings to see how the buildings had been adapted
- Identified social and architectural problems
- Explored tenants experiences of living in a remodelled scheme (in 6 schemes remodelling took place with tenants in situ) and those of staff
- Costed the schemes

### **Remodelling: Some findings**

- General satisfaction by tenants with their flats (especially those who had come from residential care)
- Schemes had, in general, become more accessible
- Most flats and facilities (for tenants and staff) were bigger and better
- The grounds/gardens were often better

### **Remodelling: Some problems/issues**

- Problems when remodelling takes place with tenants in situ
- Discrepancies between sizes of flats
- Remodelling does not necessarily cost less than building a new scheme nor does it always save time and 9 out of 10 schemes ran over budget
- Expect the unexpected!

### **2. Some recent and current research: c. Age Friendly Cities**

- The research undertaken in London and was published in 2007
- The World Health Organisation (WHO) had a global initiative to make cities more age friendly. It initiated research in 33 cities across the world and this was sponsored by the Public Health Agency of Canada.
- The research in London was the responsibility of Help the Aged.
- The Institute of Gerontology (Simon Biggs and Anthea Tinker) undertook the research.
- It was based on 8 focus groups in 2 London Boroughs



### **WHO Age Friendly Aims**

- Identify concrete indicators of an age-friendly city and produce a practical guide advocacy, community development and policy change to make urban communities age-friendly.
- Increase awareness of local needs, gaps and good ideas for improvement in order to stimulate development of more age-friendly urban settings.
- Vitality of cities: nodes from which innovation spreads.

## London Conclusions

- Think beyond families – importance of wider support
- Importance of local environments and short distances
- Shared interests between generations
- Life course: stability and change – older people can provide stability and continuity
- The absence of ‘neighbourhood’ and the need for community spaces

## The WHO report



## The response of the UK Government

- A well thought out chapter in DCLG/DH/DWP ‘Lifetime homes, Lifetime neighbourhoods’ 2008. They said:
- ‘It is not just lifetime homes that are needed, but lifetime neighbourhoods, where older people are not left out or forgotten because they cannot access buildings or public spaces. Lifetime neighbourhoods are a simple concept – but not often achieved. They are neighbourhoods where transport, good shops, green spaces, decent toilets, and benches, are consciously planned for people of all ages and conditions in mind. They promote community spirit and civic pride’. (p. 15)

## In conclusion

- There has been much good research in the last few years around age friendly research, housing and cities in the UK. This presentation has only touched on some of it but it is hoped that the next week will enable participants to see and hear much more. From my experience with working with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and other Canadian bodies we have a lot to learn from each other.