

# More than bricks and mortar

Older people's views about the importance of their homes



*“My home means everything to me.”*

This brochure summarises what older people across England told Care & Repair when we asked them *What does 'Home' mean to you?*



## Older people's homes are fundamental to their health, well being and quality of life

It is therefore important to keep sight of the centrality of 'home', as opposed to 'accommodation', in the current debates about health, social care, planning and housing policies in an ageing society.

- 90% of older people live in general housing <sup>(1)</sup>
- 30% of all homes are lived in by older people <sup>(1)</sup>
- 75% of older people are home owners <sup>(1)</sup>

## Home is pivotal to health in older age

The importance of a home which is warm, safe & secure was a key theme in older people's comments.

*“My home is...  
comfort and security”*

*“My home is...  
of suitable design for my needs”*

- 1 million vulnerable older people live in non-decent private homes <sup>(1)</sup>
- Poor housing costs the NHS £600m pa <sup>(2)</sup>

## Home underpins emotional well-being and mental health

Older people described how their home profoundly affects every aspect of their lives.

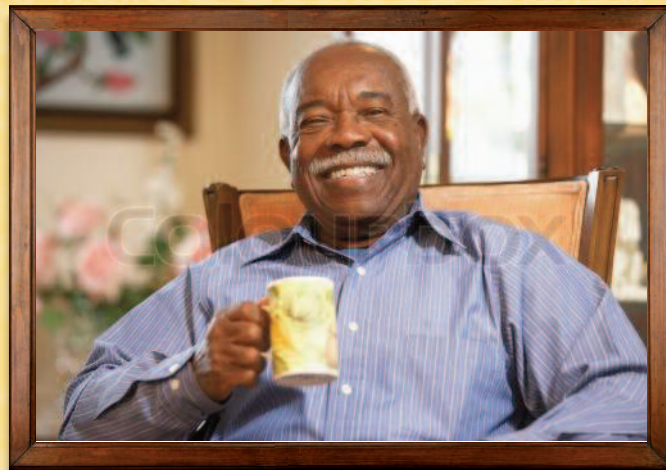
*“I am part of my house; my house is part of me. If you take my house away I lose part of myself”*

*“My home is full of memories & happiness”*

*“Home is... the place I can relax... and where my family can visit me”*

- People over 65 spend over 80% of their time at home <sup>(3)</sup>
- Depression affects 22% of men and 28% of women aged 65 or over; risk increases significantly if not living close to friends and family or poor satisfaction with home <sup>(4)</sup>

*“My home means safety, warmth... and a comfy chair”*



*Home*  
... my  
... a haven  
... a place



# Home is key to enabling independence in later life

Housing quality and suitability is a major determinant of the need for social care. It also affects the likelihood of experiencing loneliness.

'Home' and 'independence' were inextricably linked in many of the comments from older people.

*“Home... supports my changing life needs”*

*“Home is... to be able to live independently”*

*“Home is... about familiarity, especially for those with dementia”*

- Over three quarters of a million older people need accessible or adapted housing because of a medical condition or disability <sup>(1)</sup>



*“Home is where I can have my friends round for lunch”*

*Home is  
sanctuary  
to be me*

## What makes a 'good home' in later life?

These were the most frequently mentioned factors

**LOCATION** - Proximity to family, friends, social opportunities, public transport, GP/health facility, library, shops, good neighbours

**DESIGN** - Warm, with affordable heating; safe; secure; adaptable/adapted; with space - for belonging, to socialise, for family; privacy - "My own front door"

### Main reported housing difficulties

**COLD** - "Cost of heating is greatest worry", "My home is damp & cold"

**REPAIRS** - "My biggest worry is repairs & maintenance"

**ADAPTATIONS** - "I have mobility difficulties... steps to kitchen and bathroom mean I need help... ramps would make all the difference"

# Decision Makers – Time to Act

An aspiration of actively ageing at home, remaining part of a community and involved with family and friends emerges strongly from older people's key messages about 'home'.

Decision makers across housing, health, social care and planning need to ensure that this vision underpins all local policies.

- Most older people are happy where they live. They either need no help to stay living independently and well, or may need just *'that little bit of help'* to stay that way, including:

- Independent, impartial housing and care options information & advice
- Practical services to keep homes safe & secure
- Affordable warmth

- Most older people prefer to remain at home and receive care *'at or closer to home'*. This requires:

- Planning and design of a suitable housing stock
- Rapid, accessible home repairs and adaptations
- Joint planning and commissioning by health, social care and housing
- Fully integrated care eg. hospital discharge which addresses housing condition & need

- Older people's economic and social circumstances vary widely and change over time. A *spectrum of housing options* is therefore required including:

- Future-proofing – design all new homes to maximise independence & health gain
- Local Plans must include detailed analysis of demographic trends and include development of a range of housing options for older people, across tenure and including both mainstream and specialist housing
- Older people should be actively involved in local planning and decision making



Care & Repair England is a charitable industrial and provident society (IPS Reg No 25121R) established in 1986. It aims to improve older people's housing and believes that all older people should have decent living conditions in a home of their own choosing.

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## References:

- (1) DCLG (Annual) Survey of English Housing
- (2) Building Research Establishment, 2010, Good housing leads to good health
- (3) English House Conditions Survey 2008
- (4) Wilson K et al International Journal of Geriatric Psychiatry 2007

Design and Production: The Design Box  
www.thedesignbox.co.uk

Photography: Richard Moran, Colourbox