

# Policy Digest

January – March 2008

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## Further Information

The Policy Digest provides a review of Northern Housing Consortium policy activity and an update on recent national legislative, policy and regulation issues that have an impact on our members in the North. Visit our [website](#) or contact the NHC Policy section on 0191 566 1000 for further information on the work of the Consortium featured in the Digest or any other policy areas you would like to highlight.

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### Housing in Ageing Society Conference 2008 – Key Messages

*Run in conjunction with CLG the Northern Housing Consortium's conference 'Housing in an Ageing Society', which took place on the 12<sup>th</sup> March was well attended and timely with the release of the National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society 'Lifetimes homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods'*

The event saw key players in the field of older people's services from a wide range of Housing Associations and Local Authorities across the north come together to listen, learn and debate about what the strategy means for them.

Throughout the conference key statistics were featured to set the scene and provide evidence for the scale of the issue including:

Jane Everton, Deputy Director Housing Care & Support, CLG provided the key note address, she informed delegates that if we don't do something now we will be hit with big problems in the future and pressures on health and care will be extreme. The main principle around the strategy is to deliver for people now as much as looking at issues for the future. Jane finally commented that the strategy must be a living document that can be adapted as pressures change and most importantly the debate must continue.

Delegates at the conference heard key messages around:

- Our ageing population and demographic trends
  - 1 in every 5 children born today is predicted to live to 100.
  - Falls alone cost the NHS £726m a year
  - Older disabled to double by 2041
  - Long-term care expenditure would need to rise by 325% in real terms between 2002 and 2041 if we do nothing
- The national perspective from Communities and Local Government and the Housing Corporation
  - There must be a culture shift which must come from top down to change attitudes
  - Life Time Homes is a key note of the strategy which has caused most debate over cost and burden
  - The strategy is for all providers not just the specialist providers.
  - There is a need to ask what housing solutions will tomorrow's older people want?
- The role of the private sector and Registered Social Landlords in meeting older people's housing care and support needs
  - Government really needs to get the house builders to buy into Lifetime Homes at the moment its is felt there is no proper consultation in the industry on Lifetime Homes
  - In the past the view was very much that sheltered housing takes people out of the community and isolates individuals, but if the planning is right this is not the case
  - Industry need to pause and fully digest what is being proposed, as this will be the largest housing market in the future.

- Local leadership and strategic vision
  - Being a commissioner is about commissioning the environment to ensure it meets need, not about providing or procuring it's about enabling and cajoling others.
  - Extra care is only one part of a whole system including Telecare, HIA etc. It's a concept not a building, and many variations can exist e.g. virtual extra care.
  
- An older person's perspective – what this means for them
  - 'Nothing for us without us' there must be involvement of users in designing services
  - Neighbourhood and community are as important as internal arrangements

Follow [this link](#) to access launch of the strategy at Number 10 breakfast on 'You Tube'

Downloads of the key presentations from the Housing in an Ageing Society conference are available for NHC members to [view here](#).

## Age Friendly Community Project – summary

By 2020, 50% of the UK population will be aged 50 or over and by 2036 the population aged 65+ years is expected to increase by 76% and the population aged 85+ by 184%. The north's population is also ageing driven by rising longevity, the ageing of the baby-boomers, low immigration from overseas and a net loss of young adults to the rest of the UK. We know that more rural parts of the North such as Northumberland, Cumbria, North Yorkshire, Cheshire, County Durham and Lancashire will experience more rapid growth than the UK average, whereas some urban parts such as Liverpool, Manchester, Salford and Newcastle will experience considerably lower levels of growth. We also know that future housing markets will be driven by older, single households particularly in the oldest cohorts of the population and the demand will largely be for home ownership. As we live longer evidence suggests that we will be much more likely to live in ill health in later life. Such changes will have a significant impact on independence as we spend more time in our homes and the mismatch between the designed world and our capabilities becomes greater. In the future we will inevitably work longer fuelling radical changes in expectations. Alongside unprecedented growth amongst older and disabled groups this will inevitably challenge common assumptions about how homes, neighbourhoods and services are designed.

We need to act now to get this right, clearly there are challenges but also immense opportunities in planning now for an inclusive and age friendly north – in terms of improving quality of life, giving people more influence over their lives and future proofing our businesses and our communities. To support our members in this important agenda the Northern Housing Consortium is embarking on a major, cross disciplinary and multi stranded project with a central theme of 'inclusive design'. The ultimate aim of the project will be to build a holistic picture of what an '**Age Friendly Community in the North**' might look like in the year 2020, using a series of case studies. The case studies will be based around the residents of an imaginary community in the north and will highlight how the home, the neighbourhood and the services could be delivered in a way which promotes quality of life, choice and inclusion for older people. The aim of the project is to stimulate discussion and debate amongst members of the Northern Housing Consortium and our stakeholders and highlight the need for innovative and joined up thinking in this important policy agenda. Project outputs include discussion papers on 'inclusive design' and 'international learning' to be published in spring and summer 2008, an early findings report in autumn 2008 followed by a final report in 2009. We are also looking at the feasibility of a member study tour in 2009/10.

To inform the project the Northern Housing Consortium is beginning a process of consultation with older people around the north on their vision of what an age friendly community should look like. We will also consult with members and their partners on their vision of what an age friendly community should look like and the challenges organisations will face in getting there. This will include meetings with planners, architects and technology suppliers. We also intend to set up a steering group of members with an interest in contributing to the direction of the project and receiving regular updates.

If you are interested in being involved in the project please contact Sarah Taylor, Policy & Practice Development Manager on 0191 5661029 or [sarah.taylor@northern-consortium.org.uk](mailto:sarah.taylor@northern-consortium.org.uk) to discuss opportunities.

### Joint Strategic Needs Assessment – ILN Briefing

#### *What prevents someone from leading the life they want to? Where do health inequalities and social exclusion exist?*

These are the questions that local strategic partnerships will need to ask to inform the future commissioning and delivery of services. The tool they will use is Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA), a process that aims to identify the current and future health and well-being needs of a local population, informing the decisions taken on priorities and use of resources. The JSNA will provide the foundation for Local Area Agreements and will lead to agreed commissioning priorities that will improve outcomes and reduce health inequalities.

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 require upper tier local authorities and primary care trusts (PCT) in their Local Strategic Partnerships to produce a JSNA. The duty will commence on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. Whilst the statutory duty to produce a JSNA will rest with all upper tier local authorities and primary care trusts there are significant implications for statutory housing authorities, ALMO's and RSL's, indeed all those involved in providing quality places and sustainable communities. It will be important for all NHC members to understand their role as a stakeholder, and to ensure that the intelligence they holds becomes part of the JSNA process.

Several partnerships are beginning to develop JSNA. Progress in the north is being made in areas such as Bury and Rotherham. A number of lessons are beginning to emerge including the challenges of effective partnership working, the effective engagement of communities, elected members and other stakeholders, and an understanding of the outputs and what to do with them.

This [NHC briefing](#) outlines the role of JSNA and covers some of the likely implications for NHC members. Implications include the importance of engaging with the JSNA process and joining up consultation and analysis, the use of JSNA findings to plan housing interventions and the targeting of resources, and implications for market development and the personalisation agenda.

For further information contact [Sarah Taylor](#), Policy & Practice Development Manager.

## **Disabled Facilities Grant – The Package of Changes to Modernise the Programme**

On the 25<sup>th</sup> February, the Government released its plans to update and improve the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme. The proposed changes include: tackling the complexity of the system and the bureaucratic nature of the process, speeding up the delivery of a DFG and tailoring the service to individual needs. The plans, outlined in the 'Disabled Facilities Grant – The Package of Changes to Modernise the Programme' document, can be downloaded from the CLG website. <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/modernisationchangespackage>

The Northern Housing Consortium has produced a briefing paper <http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Page/QualityOfLife/briefingreports.aspx> which summarises the Government's key measures for changes to improve the delivery of the DFG programme. These key issues will be explored further at the Northern Housing Consortium's 3rd Housing Adaptations conference at York Racecourse on 1<sup>st</sup> May 2008. <http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/Page/Events/Adaptations.aspx>

## National Dementia Strategy – Briefing paper

The Government is to produce the first ever national dementia strategy in response to one of the great challenges now facing society. The project was announced by Care Services Minister Ivan Lewis on 6 August 2007. In making the announcement, Mr Lewis stated that:

*“The scale of our ambition must now meet the scale of the challenge as demographic realities mean dementia will impact on an increasing number of families in our society. The current system is failing too many dementia sufferers and their carers.”*

Dementia is the loss (usually gradual) of mental abilities such as thinking, remembering, and reasoning. It is not a disease, but a group of symptoms that may accompany some diseases or conditions affecting the brain. There are many different types of dementia, each with their own causes. The most common dementia symptoms include loss of memory, confusion, and changes in personality, mood and behaviour.

There are currently 700,000 people with dementia in the UK (575,000 in England); 62% of these people have Alzheimer’s disease which is the most common type. Dementia is a disease typically associated with older age; one in five people over the age of 80 and one in 20 people over 65 has a form of dementia.

In the North of England, the situation is very much the same as the national one. Currently, 29% of all people with dementia in England live in the North and this is expected to remain the case in 2021. The number of people with dementia in the North of England will increase by 35% between 2007 and 2021, which is in line with national trends.

The Strategy will concentrate on three main areas, Improving Awareness, Early diagnosis and interventions and improving the quality of care.

The role of Social housing providers in supporting the needs of people suffering from dementia for many years has been vital, and the introduction of this National Strategy will place a greater emphasis and strengthen their role further. The role that the social housing sector can play is wide ranging and comes in different forms; from the implementation of the Supporting People programme, to the work of Home Improvement Agencies, through to providing specialist housing like Extra Care schemes, or support in the home making use of assistive technology, and the latest Telecare, Telehealth and Telemedicine systems.

The Strategy is expected to put a strong emphasis in enabling and supporting people with dementia to live independently in their own homes and this is where housing providers are able to make a difference.

The Northern Housing Consortium has produced a [briefing paper](#) providing an overview of the Governments Plans, and we will be submitting a full response to the consultation later in the year, when the draft strategy will be published.

## Quality of Place

### Sub National Review

Government has published a consultation paper 'Prosperous Places' on taking forward key Sub National Review (SNR) recommendations. The joint CLG and BERR paper can be downloaded from the [BERR website](#).

This consultation sets out and seeks views on the proposals contained in the SNR for putting in place reforms that would:

- Streamline the regional tier, introducing integrated strategies and giving the regional development agencies (RDAs) lead responsibility for regional planning;
- Strengthen the local authority role in economic development, including a new statutory duty to assess local economic conditions; and
- Support collaboration by local authorities across economic areas

We anticipate the full consultation on the diverse elements of the Sub National Review and the implementation programme during this quarter 2008. We will be providing a response to this consultation and will be seeking opportunities to ensure that Homes and Communities Agency has operational flexibility to anticipate and respond to the needs of the North. We will be hosting a meeting with Sir Bob Kerlake and the three Regional Housing Board Chairs to open these discussions.

## Unlocking the Talent of our Communities

The direction of travel for government policy continues to follow themes of empowerment and opportunity, from last years Local Government White Paper, to the Next Steps to Full Employment strategy from DWP. Following the response to the Hills Review, government has now released a pre White Paper consultation document titled [“Unlocking the Talent of our Communities”](#). The White paper will be delivered in the Summer 2008. Central themes in the White paper will include

- How can we tackle worklessness and promote enterprise in deprived areas?
- What are the best means of co-ordinating social, economic and physical regeneration?
- How can we encourage active citizenship?
- How can social housing tenants be given more choice and voice?
- How can we strengthen local accountability?

The Working Neighbourhoods Fund will come into operation this quarter and we shall be tracking this new approach and considering the impact from a housing point of view.

The forthcoming Homes and Communities Agency will have a key role to play in this agenda – but will also bring forward key challenges. The implementation of Homes and Communities will signal potential changes in relationships and investment strategies. The Local Authority sector will have a key relationship with Homes and Communities and investment will only be secured on condition of other local investment strategies being in place via the LSP and the LAA. The embedding of the housing sector within the LAA and MAA frameworks therefore becomes increasingly vital. We have a good handle on LAA activity across the North and are well placed to support members in this arena. However we need to further develop our links with economic partners and the RDAs to understand how strategic housing interventions will contribute to meeting GVA targets at regional, sub regional and local levels.

## Performance Improvement

### **Local area Agreements – What are your priorities?**

Members will be aware of the June deadline for agreeing the indicators that reflect local priorities. Having pared down the number of national performance indicators to *only* 198, local authorities and their partners are to choose up to 35 that best reflect the aims of the Local Area Agreement. Government Offices across the region are working with the local authorities to agree the local indicators chosen and ensure some correlation between local and national priorities.

Within the 198 national indicators, there are very few that could be seen as traditional social housing measures. However, there are a number of cross cutting measures around Consortium themes of Quality of Life and Quality of Place and it is important that housing makes its voice heard in Local Strategic Partnerships and other cross-service groups.

The agreed priorities may well form the basis of the Comprehensive Area Assessment, which is to replace the Comprehensive Performance Assessment from 2009. One of the key features of CAA will be the extent to which local authorities and their partners work together to improve services to residents. By meaningful involvement in the current stage of agreeing priorities, strategic authorities and landlords providing homes can demonstrate and highlight the role housing has in improving Quality of Place and Quality of Life.

## Investment and Resources

### The Budget 2008

The Budget 2008 sets out how the Government is working to achieve its economic objective to build a strong economy and a fair society, Alistair Darling delivered his first budget on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> March 2008.

- **Maintaining a stable economy** – the perceptions in this years budget show that the economy is expected to grow by 1 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> to 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> per cent in 2008, and by 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> to 2 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> per cent in 2009, and 2 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> to 3 per cent in 2010; and inflation is set to remain low and stable.
- **Stability and Opportunity: building a strong, sustainable future** – this years budget also sets out the next steps on tackling child poverty, supporting families and ensuring security in old age, including further financial support for children which will lift up to 250,000 children out of poverty; further action, with the energy companies and Ofgem to help vulnerable groups deal with rising energy prices; alongside the Winter Fuel Payment, an additional one-off payment of £100 to over-80s households and £50 to over-60s households in 2008-09.
- **Stronger communities and effective public services** - a package of measures to deliver decent and affordable housing for all by increasing housing supply and making housing more affordable. This will include looking at ways to improve the availability of long term and fixed rate mortgages.
- **Protecting the environment** - laying the ground work for the introduction of five year carbon budgets, investment of £26m to help make homes greener, and new non domestic buildings to become zero carbon from 2019.

In this years budget the key points for housing included the announcement by the Government to protect borrowers from risk, through its commitment to look at ways to improve the availability of long term and fixed rate mortgages. This will also allow borrowers the flexibility to move or obtain a new mortgage rate when rates go down. The Chancellor proposed longer term fixed rates over the duration of 10, 20 and even 25 years. The chancellor asked for views on this and will report back in October in his pre budget report.

Changes to shared equity schemes were also announced, from April key workers, such as teachers and nurses will be given help to get onto the property ladder by the government lending 50% of the equity of the home, compared to the current maximum level of 25%.

News that the government has identified sites for 70,000 new homes, in addition 40,000 are already under construction. This will contribute towards the government target of 3 million homes by 2020.

Stamp duty on shared ownership homes will not be required until buyers own 80% of the equity of their homes.

With mortgage companies less keen to lend due to tightening credit conditions, the chancellor said he would bring together investors and lenders to try to find "market-led solutions" to give lenders access to stable and low-cost funding.

For the elderly, although the news of the additional one off winter fuel payments is welcome, many older people will feel it is nowhere near enough to address the raft of price hikes that they have had to contend with this year. This increase is good news in the short term, however there needs to be a longer term solution. Gordon Lishman, Director General of Age Concern, in his response to the Budget said ".....We wanted to see the £200 Winter Fuel Payment raised to at least £300 and significant investment made in energy efficiency schemes, in particular increasing the maximum Warm Front grant available. Through the Energy Bill the government should also make it compulsory for energy companies to offer meaningful social tariffs to vulnerable groups."

**Read the full budget report here:**

**[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/9/bud08\\_completereport.pdf](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/9/9/bud08_completereport.pdf)**

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