

Press Release

Age Friendly Communities in the North: Neighbourhood 2020

The ageing population is being described as one of the most significant issues of the 21st century and probably the single greatest challenge facing Housing, Planning, Social Care and Health organisations over the next generation. There are now more pensioners than children - at a national level, older households make up almost a third of total households. And the majority (70%) own their own home, with only 5% in sheltered or care homes.

The Northern Housing Consortium (NHC) has just completed an ambitious project to explore what an 'age friendly' community might look like in the year 2020 and beyond. The final report (sponsored by Keepmoat and Tunstall), 'A Guide to Age Friendly Communities in the North: People and Places 2020' was launched at the NHC's Age Friendly Communities event at York Racecourse on Tuesday 26th January.

Charlotte Harrison, NHC's Director of Policy and Strategy commented,

"The aim of the project was to provide support services and practical steps for Members to take in response to this dynamic policy agenda. We selected some key partners to work with, including design champions from local authorities across the three Northern regions; Northern Architecture to assist us with the visioning work, and, of course, our Members. We knew that high quality engagement with communities would be critical to the success of the project, and have consulted with over 400 older people across the North to help them articulate their dreams and aspirations for their local neighbourhood in 2020."

"This has been a two year project, and we have already published two interim reports, looking at international best practice and a discussion paper on inclusive design. We are extremely proud of the final report, but of course our work doesn't stop here – in many ways this is just the beginning. Our Members know they need to design strategies now to enable them to deal with this agenda effectively going forward, and it is our role to ensure they have the support and guidance to do that. We are working hard to build an evidence base to demonstrate the impact housing can have on the physical and mental health and wellbeing of older people, and to build links between the housing, health and social care sectors so that a more efficient, joined-approach is taken to the commissioning and delivery of services in the North."

For further information on the Age Friendly Communities project or the Northern Housing Consortium, please email enquiries@northern-consortium.org.uk or visit www.northern-consortium.org.uk.

ENDS

Some interesting statistics...

- 1 in 4 babies born now will reach 100
- Over the next 30 years, the population aged 65 years and over is set to rise from 9.7 million to 17 million, an increase of 76%.

- Fastest growing age group are the 'middle old' group - the number of people aged 85+ in England will increase by 1.4 million by 2031, an increase of 114%
- Nationally 49% of household growth to 2026 will be over 65's and the NE has the highest projected increase with 65% of household growth to 2026 comprising households over 65
- The 'oldest old' (100+) will increase from 10,000 to 250,000 by 2051
- The North has the lowest levels of life expectancy and the proportion of residents rating themselves as in poor health is consistently higher
- Years of ill health have increased by 1.6 in the last decade
- By 2041 older people with disabilities will increase by 200%; dementia will increase by 150% by 2051
- If nothing changes the social care expenditure would need to increase more than threefold (325 per cent) by 2041 to meet demographic pressure
- Over 50's account for 40% of consumer spending, 60% of total savings and around 80% of UK wealth
- Two thirds of volunteering is undertaken by the over 50s. Over half of unpaid care is provided by the over 50s estimated at £87bn a year

Notes to editors

1. The Northern Housing Consortium is a non-political, not for profit, member based organisation, whose members between them manage almost 90% of social housing in the North. Our main roles are:
 - To provide a comprehensive range of timely, relevant and affordable services for members with a distinct focus on Northern issues
 - To take a lead role in enabling the improvement of housing and organisational performance in the North
 - To work with Government and other bodies to ensure the region benefits from the resources and funding available to provide safe, vibrant, sustainable communities
2. Northern Architecture's role is to promote high quality architecture and design of public space in the North East of England. They have two main aims:
 - To work with everyone involved in providing buildings and public spaces to achieve the highest standards of development and design.
 - To raise public expectations about architecture and design, stimulate public debate and provide opportunities for the public to become involved in the process of making architecture and public space.