



Older Persons Housing Strategy

2018 - 2022

Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council is committed to delivering a great service for older people across the borough. This strategy sets out the housing services offer for older people not only living in council owned homes but in all tenures. We know, as people get older their housing needs change. We also understand everyone has different aspirations when it comes to living 'independently'.

Throughout this strategy we will outline how the service will empower older people accessing the service to take ownership for the care and support they receive in order to achieve independence. We will also include how technology will develop our service offer.

We consider an older person to be anyone who is aged 60+.



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I am pleased to introduce Dacorum Borough Council's Older Persons Strategy for 2018-2022. The Council understands the need to provide a range of housing options that meet the demands and requirements for older people living in our borough.

Councillor Margaret Griffiths

The Housing Vision for Older People in Dacorum

To deliver a great housing service our vision is for *“older people to feel independent, maintain a sense of belonging, and have access to good quality housing and support that meets their current and future needs.”*

This strategy supports the councils corporate vision of *‘...working in partnership to create a borough that enables Dacorum’s communities to thrive and prosper’.*

Through an effective older person’s service, we can enable older people to live in safe and clean environments and build strong and vibrant communities. This also supports our commitment to continuing to provide good quality and affordable homes, particularly to those most in need. We also recognize the contributions older people make to the economic growth and prosperity of our borough through employment and volunteering. As a landlord we will also work with our tenants to achieve efficient and modern services.



The National Context

Over the next 10 – 15 years, the number of older people living in England will continue to increase. By 2025 as many as one in five of our population will be 65+. This is roughly 22% of the whole population.

As people get older, their health can deteriorate, they are less able to travel and their housing needs change. This create challenges for local authorities and other public service and with more people the ability to keep providing these services will only get harder. Older people are also lonelier. Simple issues like being able to move around easily, often mean that older people stay at home and have no contact with others for days or weeks at a time. We also know that loneliness can also mean older people are using services like the local doctors to make contact with other people.

Changes in legislation have pushed local authorities and public services to recognise the importance of a 'person centred approach'. This stops services taking a one size fits all stance and recognise each and every person will have their own needs and aspirations. It is then up to the service to adapt to fit this person. An example of this is The Care Act (2014) which introduced statutory responsibilities to promote wellbeing and keep adults at risk safe. This is achieved through the principles of 'making safeguarding personal'.

Nationally services now understand the impact being lonely and isolated can have on older people and are working to tackle this. To help people keep their independence, grow their support networks and stay well we must shape our housing offer to overcome these national and growing issues. There are however risks to our ability to provide these services.





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Proposed changes to how supported housing is currently funded mean areas with two-tier councils would stop funding being paid directly to the local authorities for short term or refuge accommodation. This means local authorities would be required to evidence need to receive the right amount of grant funding.

There is also a growing number of older people becoming homeless. The Homelessness Reduction Act (2017) means local authorities must prevent or relieve people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness through housing advice and identifying suitable housing options. For many older people the experience of temporary accommodation could be unsettling. Also their needs for properties with adaptations could mean they are waiting longer for a more permanent home. If moving into supported housing, we also recognise homelessness can impact people negatively and lead to poor mental health, substance abuse or self-neglect.

The Local Context

There are roughly 25,000 older people aged 65+ living in the borough. Dacorum Borough Council has 32 supported housing schemes which are home to around 2000 of these older people. We also work closely with other organisations working to support and house older people and provide a community alarm service. The average life expectancy for a male is 80 years old and for a female it is 84.

We know there are some wards where the life expectancy is significantly less and this is a result of living in deprivation or limited access to services. 11% of older people in Dacorum are living in deprivation. Although this is better than the average for Hertfordshire and England we recognise the impact of this on those older people and are committed to tackling this.

Delivering a Great Service

Equality and Diversity

As a Housing Service, we will treat everyone regardless of their; age, disability, gender, race, religion or belief and sexual orientation (Equality Act 2010) fairly and with respect. We will also ensure our services are accessible to all.

Value for Money

Delivering value for money is about ensuring older people accessing our service feel they are getting worthwhile support. Treating people as an individual and involving them in decisions around their support means, we can tailor our offer to their specific needs. It is also about creating environments that older people want to live in.

This ranges from maintaining their home, investing in communal areas or creating opportunities to socialize and feel a part of the community. To support the wider housing service with its commitment to value for money we will also look at how we can make our supported housing a desirable place to live. This will encourage older people in council homes to move into supported housing allowing others to use homes and reduce the number of adaptations.



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Partnership working

Partnership working is about having the right people around the table so that every older person accessing our housing service can live a good quality life and feel safe.

We know that housing, adult social care and the health service are key to making this happen. Our communities, local transport providers, businesses and voluntary organizations also have a part to play. So that we can deliver a well-rounded support offer for older people, we will continue to invest in these relationships.

Safeguarding

As a Housing Service we maintain a strong commitment to safeguarding vulnerable adults and protecting them from abuse.

Our Staff are key to this and we regularly invest in training and develop robust policies and procedures to supported them. We work proactively with a range of partners such as the police, social services and the voluntary and community sector to promote ways our tenants and the wider population of older people can stay safe.



The Commitments

We value the thoughts of others when developing our services. To write this strategy and set the direction for our service over the next four years we spoke to tenants, staff, voluntary organizations and statutory service providers.

We have also achieved an outstanding service award through the Centre for Housing Support (CHS). This required us to demonstrate a high level of service across lots of areas. Although we received outstanding and were commended for the staff who work in our supported housing and the level of involvement we have from our tenants, we know we can be even better. Using recommendations from the CHS and the thoughts we gained through consultation, we have five commitments that we will deliver through this strategy. These are:

Commitment 1: Older people's housing allows them to achieve their aspirations for independence

Commitment 2: Older people are in control of their housing and make decisions that support their needs

Commitment 3: Our supported housing is somewhere older people want to live

Commitment 4: We take a 'channel shift' not 'channel shove' approach to using technology in our older person's service offer

Commitment 5: We give older people a voice in the future of Dacorum's housing and communities



Commitment 1: Older people's housing allows them to achieve independence

We recognize housing plays a big part in enabling people to live independently. Often medical or mobility issues affect older people's independence meaning their housing needs also come with a need for extra support.

We recognize the importance of empowering older people to take control of the care they receive so it meets their needs in the best way possible. It is also important that the structure of their home does not reduce their ability to feel independent.

To achieve this, we will:

- Encourage older people to move into supported housing before their needs increase so they can live independently for longer
- Work with older people, carers' and families in council owned homes to tailor support plans and get the right support in place
- Improve relationships with local hospitals so older people have better housing options when they are discharged from hospital
- Develop housing options that are dementia friendly and enable older people living with dementia to feel safe and secure in their home
- Develop our use of technology to help older people with daily tasks e.g. taking medication

Commitment 2: Older people are in control of their housing and support

The issues created by poor or unsuitable housing for older people. Finding accommodation that is suitable for older people is essential to delivering this commitment. Dacorum Borough Councils supported housing is designed to meet the needs of older people including those with complex needs.

We also recognize that not everyone wants to live in supported housing meaning we must also commit to helping people to stay safe in other types of housing. We also understand that managing a home can affect a person's quality of life, staying warm and keeping properties weather tight is key to delivering this.

To achieve this, we will:

- Be honest with older people when their housing is not suitable and offer alternatives such as living in a supported housing scheme
- Tackle fuel poverty by carrying out inspections and working with partner charities to help older people make their homes more energy efficient
- Invest in our approach to tackling hoarding in older people's homes
- Where possible, carry out adaptations to a council owned home to help make moving around the home easier
- When giving housing advice and allocating properties consider the persons needs and mobility
- Be proactive in helping older people to stay safe in their home and share information on how to reduce risk to themselves

Commitment 3: Our supported housing is somewhere older people want to live

The decision to move into supported housing can be daunting. For many it can mean leaving a home they have lived in for a long time, additionally it might be a down size in the property.

Supported housing has many benefits including reassurance, support, more opportunities to socialize, repairs and maintenance and a safe and secure environment. Promoting these benefits will help to ensure our supported housing is somewhere people want to live.

To achieve this, we will:

- Ensure our repairs and maintenance service are easy to access and consider specific needs of older people when reporting or carrying out repairs
- Invest in communal areas so they are places older people enjoy
- Be proactive in encouraging older people to move to supported housing before reaching crisis point
- Continue to offer a high quality support service by investing in our Supported Housing Officers
- Create inclusive communities and raise awareness of different cultures within our scheme so everyone feels at home regardless of their race, gender or religion

Commitment 4: We take a 'channel shift' not 'channel shove' approach to using technology

'Channel shift' is a term used to explain how interactions with older people can be made more effective and efficient through technology.

Technology offers many opportunities for older people to tackle issues that affect them. From shopping on the internet to chatting to friends and accessing services, getting online has become a big part of daily life. However not everyone wants to go digital. Technology has also advanced the type of support we can offer.

To achieve this, we will:

- Develop a range of communication channels for older people to use that still recognizes the value of face to face contact
- Ensure services and support can be accessed by those who are not digitally active
- Invest in our use of telecare and telehealth to improve our support offer
- Empower older people who do want to get online by continuing our Digital Skills program through Tenant Academy
- Make the services that are online easy to use so older people can self-serve and resolve problems independently

The Commitments and Conclusion

Commitment 5: We give older people a voice in the future of the housing service

As a council that we are passionate about giving our tenants a voice and empowering them to feel part of the wider community. We know that loneliness is a growing problem for many older people. This can be a result of lost confidence or physical limitations such as mobility.

We are committed to a robust approach to engagement, developing relationships with partners in the voluntary and community sector and investing in activities.

To achieve this, we will:

- Continue to engage with tenants on a daily basis and consult with them to shape our services
- Develop a program of activities and engagement opportunities based on the needs of individual schemes
- Work with voluntary partners to identify opportunities for older people in the community such as volunteering to create wider social networks
- Encourage older people to engage with young people by working with schools and youth groups to develop intergenerational projects

Conclusion

Within this strategy we have set out how Dacorum Borough Council housing service will work with key stakeholders, partners and older residents to ensure that we continue to meet the housing needs of our ageing population.

We will ensure that tenants have access to the right information, in the right format and at right time to be able to make informed choices on the housing options and support available to them in the Borough. We will continue to provide tailored and co-ordinated support within our Supported housing schemes and to our general needs tenants.

Throughout this strategy we have outlined the importance of partnership working and will continue to keep this at the core of our service delivery to support and improve the health and wellbeing of our older residents.

By providing the right information and support and empowering older people to have a voice we aim to ensure that our residents feel safe, supported and connected.

This strategy will be monitored by the Tenant and Leaseholder Committee, Supported Housing Forum and the Housing and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee will receive an annual update.