



EDINBURGH TENANTS FEDERATION

Edinburgh's Federation of Tenants' and Residents' Associations

Response to the Draft Strategy for Housing for Older People: Consultation

September 2011

1.0 Background

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) is the umbrella organisation for 60 tenants and residents groups in Edinburgh and a Registered Tenants Organisation (RTO). ETF is a voluntary organisation and its purpose is to represent tenants and residents in the city of Edinburgh, and to assist tenants and residents associations in the city to work together with their landlords to ensure that they have a say in the running of their communities.

A focus group of ETF Executive Committee members (representing a mix of Housing Association and City of Edinburgh Council tenants) met on 25th August 2011 to consider the proposals set out in the Scottish Government's *Draft Strategy for Housing Older People: Consultation*.

Jackie Walder, from the Housing Options and Support – Independent Living Section of the Scottish Government was in attendance to present proposals and answer questions about the consultation papers.

This paper highlights ETF members' views.

2.0 Summary

Edinburgh Tenants Federation (ETF) agrees with many of the proposals in *Draft Strategy for Housing for Older People* but queries how these will be funded and implemented.

3.0 ETF Response

The following statements outline ETF's response to the consultation paper. The statements from the consultation paper are outlined below in bold and italics; ETF's response is in normal text.

3.1 *Older people in Scotland are valued as an asset, their voices are heard, and older people are supported to enjoy full and positive lives in their own home or in a homely setting.*

- Members thought that this is "a nice idea" but are not sure whether or how it will happen.
- More preventative measures are needed as well as planning ahead and more joined up thinking.

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- The needs of people should be recognised not the wants.
- Funding should be distributed on a needs basis.
- For this to work all providers should be working together. This is not just the responsibility of the Scottish Government.

3.2 *The Scottish Government should provide a clear vision for housing for older people in Scotland, which enables housing to play a full role in partnership with health and social care in supporting older people to live independently.*

- Partnership working is vital.
- We suggest that the statement should read:

"The Scottish Government should provide a clear vision for housing for older people in Scotland, which enables health and social care to play a full role in partnership with housing in supporting older people to live independently."

- Housing should be built in areas where it is needed, in appropriate communities. If shops and other amenities are built far away then older people are not living independently. Co-ordinated planning and infrastructure is required for this to work.

3.3 *Older people should receive the information and advice they need in time to make the best decisions about their housing and support.*

- We agree with this statement; however the needs of older people should be taken into account when planning information provision. For example, the focus group highlighted, "We think it is sometimes a waste of time referring to web addresses as many people do not have access to a computer. This information should be made widely available and should be user friendly and easy to read."
- There was a perception in the focus group that older people would prefer an "older worker" to discuss their housing and support needs with as they may feel threatened or uncomfortable by younger members of staff. Staff should also be appropriately qualified, and be empathetic to the needs of older people.

3.4 *By 2016, we will have extended the range of information and advice services for older people / there will be a comprehensive range of information and advice services covering housing and related support, which are accessible to older people throughout Scotland.*

- Information should be sent out to people when they turn 50 or 55 so that they can plan for the future.
- Here are some suggestions of places that the information should be made available:
 - ✓ Post office
 - ✓ housing officer
 - ✓ Doctors/surgeries
 - ✓ shops
 - ✓ banks
 - ✓ libraries
 - ✓ community centres
 - ✓ by all front line staff

3.5 *We want to see housing adaptation services across Scotland that respond to the challenges of an ageing population. All older people, wherever they live and whatever the tenure of their home, should have access to services which can adapt their home, reducing the risk of incidents, and improving their independence and quality of life.*

- We agree with this statement although it should be centrally controlled and not controlled by Local Authorities. The Scottish Government should oversee the housing adaptation services but local authorities would deliver the service; the contract should not go to a private company but to Councils who have the local knowledge.

3.6 *By 2021, we expect/aim to reduce the proportion of people who say that they need an adaptation to their home.*

- We think more clarity is needed in this statement. Does this mean that the Scottish Government are going to be tightening up the criteria for people claiming to need adaptations?

3.7 *Older people should live in homes, which are warm, dry and secure, and should have easy access to reliable trades people to undertake repairs and maintenance.*

- There is no mention of how this will be paid for. Will there be financial help for paying for heating as well as for paying for trades people?
- The Government needs to tackle gas and electric companies and control the price increases.
- The basic entitlement for everyone is to have a warm, dry house.

3.8 *By 2021, we will have increased the number of older people who live in well-maintained and warm homes, which are free from significant disrepair.*

- No comment.

3.9 *Advice and practical assistance should be available to all older people, to help them find housing, which provides a suitable physical environment to meet their health, social care and support needs.*

- Perhaps the statement should read:

"Advice and practical assistance should be available to all people, to help them stay in or find housing in an appropriate suitable physical environment to meet their health, social care and support needs."

- We agree with the statement but some older people may wish to stay in their own homes; this advice and practical assistance should also cover the ability to remain at home.
- Opportunities for support in advice meetings should be considered with the option of having another person present.
- Older people should not be forced to move but assistance should be offered to them.

3.10 *By 2021, we aim to reduce the proportion of older people who say that they want to move to more suitable housing.*

- We agree with this statement as reducing the need for older people to move to more suitable housing will mean that more properties are suitably adapted to their needs.

3.11 *We should make best use of our public investment in sheltered and very sheltered housing, so that it helps shift the balance of care away from care homes and supports objectives to reduce the need for an emergency admission to hospital.*

- This does not seem to take into account need for further health assessments or more health problems that may arise. You cannot plan for older people to not go to hospital for an emergency.

3.12 *By 2021, we will have facilitated the upgrading or redevelopment of sheltered housing (in the social rented sector) that is no longer fit for purpose, whether through physical re-modelling, re-focusing its use, or re-designing support services, so that it most effectively the needs of the local population.*

- Is there a word missing?
- Should this read:

"...so that it most effectively meets the needs of the population."

- We agree with this statement.

3.13 *Products and services should be available to provide older people with choice and flexibility to invest safely in their housing and support, and to achieve the personal outcomes they want.*

- Personal outcomes will not be achieved unless investment is made – current funding climate makes this seem unrealistic.

3.14 *By 2021, we will have helped more older people to use their personal resources to make improvements to their home and support arrangements, which increase their independence and quality of life.*

- The focus group had strong views on this topic, highlighted through the following comments, “Does this mean that money from pensions, inheritance and equity release will be used? If so then this is not on at all. People’s savings for their retirement could be drained.”

3.15 *New housing in Scotland should be accessible and adaptable and meet the needs of older people.*

- If suitable housing is available for older people then they might be willing to move (for example if it is in the same area).
- It might also be worth considering extending houses if it would work out cheaper.

3.16 *By 2021, we will have increased the proportion of new housing being built that is suitable for the attractive to older people.*

- Where will the money come from to pay for this? Given the budget cuts this seems unrealistic.

3.17 *We want to see increases in social housing support services with a focus on prevention, so that every older person has the opportunity to access services which help them maintain their independence and have full and active lets.*

- We agree with this statement; older people should be entitled to take up an assessment on a property at least every five years.

3.18 *By 2021, we want housing support services to be available in all areas of Scotland and offered by public, private and third sector organisations.*

- Charities shouldn’t be left to do all of this but it shouldn’t be privatised either. The Scottish Government should be controlling this.

3.19 *We want all older people to access handyperson type services, either as an integral part of their tenancy, or for a charge at a level that does not act as a disincentive to uptake.*

- Members agreed with this statement, however there was concern about how funding levels would be set and by whom. As one tenant commented, "Fair enough, but who will set the level?"
- Contractors/handyman services should be local. This is important because this person is from the area and can be easily contacted and get to the house within a short period of time.

3.20 ***By 2021, we want handy services to have contributed to a reduction in the need for care homes and emergency admission to hospital, as well as improving people's quality of life.***

- We fail to see the connection between handy services and reduced care home and emergency hospital admission. This needs to be made clearer.

3.21 ***We will encourage and support housing organisations to play a full part in building the capacity of communities to support older people living in the local area.***

- We agree but why should housing organisations just be involved? The NHS, Scottish Government, social work and community should all be involved.
- What about private housing?
- Funding is vital for this to work; there is no point ploughing lots of funding in only for it to be taken away when it is really needed.

3.22 ***By 2021, social landlords will play a central role in sustaining communities which support local people and disabled people.***

- Disabled people are not mentioned in this consultation until now!
- We disagree with this as it is up to the Scottish Government not the landlord so that everyone is included.
- This should be controlled by a non-political organisation (such as an Arms Length Management Organisation).

3.23 ***We will encourage the development of telecare, as a key element in support for older people to live independently at home.***

- Providing there is no additional charge to the tenant / older person. If a charge is needed then it should not be called a "means test" but some sort of benefit help for example, "telecare grant". Older people may be put off from applying for applying for help is it is called a "means test".
- Staffing levels should also be maintained.

3.24 *By 2021, all older people over 75 years will be offered a telecare package in accordance with their assessed needs.*

- No age limit should be put on this; just that they have their needs assessed.

4.0 Conclusion

In conclusion, Edinburgh's Tenants Federation does support many of the statements in this consultation. However caution is needed as many of the proposals will require funding and given the current financial situation we feel that these proposals may not be financially viable. We also think that disabled people should have been mentioned a lot earlier in the consultation rather than towards the end as you do not have to be older to require support.