

Bron Afon 



'Creating Homes for Life'

Older Persons' Housing Strategy

2018-2028

1. INTRODUCTION

This strategy sets out the approach we will take to plan our contribution and approach to meeting the housing and support needs of older people in Torfaen. A key driver for the strategy centres around the performance of our 35 existing retirement housing schemes and a need for these to be fit for the future needs of our communities and cost effective for us as a business. That said, this strategy focuses much more widely than our existing retirement housing stock and includes older people living in our general needs properties who make up 31.77% of our tenant population across our general needs homes.

We have deliberately set some far reaching, ambitious outcomes which we are looking to achieve to make sure that we achieve and embed this approach. The strategy is underpinned by the local, national and UK policy context around older people's housing and support needs. We commissioned Housing LIN¹ (The Housing Learning and Improvement Network) who are recognised by the government and the housing with care sector as experts in the field of advice and support to undertake a review of contemporary older people's housing policy and practice in order to inform its development.

There is a strong acknowledgement that provision of support underpins this strategy as it is impossible to separate the 'bricks and mortar' housing solution from the support which goes along with it to create a solution which helps people remain independent in their homes as they get older.

This strategy has been developed following conversations with our partners in strategic housing, health and social care and with the involvement of both older people and our older people of the future. We recognise that this strategy is going to take some time to deliver, hence the ten year timeframe.

2. SOME KEY FACTS ABOUT OLDER PEOPLE IN TORFAEN/OUR HOMES

There are currently 3,368 people² aged 40+ living in our homes of which 2,440 are aged 65+. On the basis of our information it is predicted that this will increase by 8% over the next 10 years.

¹ Housing LIN brings together housing, health and social care professionals in England and Wales to exemplify innovative housing solutions for older people and is recognised by government and the housing with care sector as a 'knowledge hub' on specialist housing

² Number of tenants (not households) living in our homes

Torfaen as a whole³

47% of the Torfaen population of 92,052 people are aged 45+

27% of the Torfaen population are aged 45-64

20% of the Torfaen population are aged 65+

3. HOW HAS THIS STRATEGY BEEN DEVELOPED?

We have developed this strategy following extensive consultation with tenants, potential tenants our staff and key stakeholders. Given the strategy has a lifespan of 10 years, even though it will be regularly reviewed in that time it was felt very important that the focus of the consultation to inform the development of this strategy was on our tenants and potential tenants who were not yet older people currently living in retirement housing or similar but were of an age to be considering doing so in the next 10-15 years. Some of these people were already on the Homeseeker register and contemplating a move to downsize their home.

We held a really successful Task and Finish group of members and staff across a wide age range which focused on:

- People's housing aspirations generally including views on access to services and the wider community
- Views around choice, tenure type and cost and what's important to people
- Views on 'brand' and what would attract people to consider looking at their options

We got a wide range of views but also some very clear consensus about what was important – the top issues being: Having sufficient space for family to stay on occasion, having sufficient space for storage, easy access in and out of the building, close to local amenities and services, safe and secure and affordable.

Living in traditional retirement housing or with lots of other older people was not considered attractive – the message was clearly that a 'good neighbour' was far more important and their age was regarded as almost irrelevant.

We ran the same exercise with Afon Retirement Forum and got very similar views in some areas and unsurprisingly, some diverging views with a keenness to bring back building based wardens and some concern about living with younger people.

Key stakeholders were also significantly involved in shaping the principles and outcomes of the strategy. These included Torfaen County Borough Council both politicians and senior officers in Strategic Housing, Adult Social Care, Commissioning and Community Services, In One Place programme and health partners.

³ ONS mid-year Population estimates 2016

4. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The Welsh context

Wales has a strong approach to legislation, policy and guidance to support a good quality of life for older people. The key aspects of this include:

The Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014 which has a goal around enabling people as they get older to overcome the barriers they face in achieving and maintaining well-being, with minimal reliance on formal social care interventions. Better quality and suitably located housing can make it possible to live at home for longer and has the potential to create better connected communities which is a key component to delivering on this legislation.

The Strategy for Older People in Wales 2013-2023⁴ has an ambition around older people having access to housing and services which supports their needs and promotes their independence and the National Outcomes Framework for people who need care and support and their carers also references the need for a home that supports people to achieve well-being (2016)

Ageing Well in Wales was launched in October 2014 as a five year partnership of government, public and third sector agencies in Wales, Chaired by the Older People's Commissioner for Wales with a key area of focus around making Wales a nation of 'age friendly' communities around which housing is a central focus.

It is clearly acknowledged in Welsh policy that housing plays a central role in promoting the health and well-being of older people, however, the role of housing in supporting an ageing population and the need to develop more attractive and aspirational forms of housing for older people is less clear. In response to that the Welsh Government's Expert Group for Housing an Ageing Population in Wales published a report⁵ in early 2017 which looked at widening choice for older people with many of the actions flowing from it aimed at Local Authorities and their partners, i.e. RSLs and others. Key issues coming from this report really focus on choice, avoiding 'one size fits all' solutions, encompassing HAPPI standards⁶ and ensuring access to information support and advice around making the right housing choices.

The Torfaen context

⁴ <http://gov.wales/topics/health/publications/socialcare/strategies/older/?lang=en>

⁵ The Expert Group 2017 report can be viewed at <http://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/housing-supply/expert-group-on-housing-an-ageing-population/?lang=en>

⁶ [HAPPI standards](#) are recommendations for design of housing for older people. They have their origins in the 2009 report by the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation which contains case studies with details of design features and provide some information about how the schemes are integrated with the wider community.

A lot of consultation has taken place with both politicians and senior officers of Torfaen County Borough Council in strategic housing and social care in the development of this strategy and the principles underlining it. From these conversations it is clear that there is an opportunity for Bron Afon as the largest housing provider in the borough to help shape the way older people's housing can contribute to local strategic priorities.

The Torfaen Public Service Board Delivery Plan for the Strategy for Older People 2015-2023⁷ references housing provision as well as support for older people to live well in their homes. The developing Well-Being plan also has a strong reference to housing and Bron Afon are actively involved in the development of that plan.

Torfaen County Borough Council Social Care and Housing Service Plan 2016-7 refers to a need to review and develop alternative service models for care support and housing with the expected outcome being an increase in housing options for Torfaen residents.

The Torfaen Adult Service Market Position Statement 2013-2018 also recognises the need for people aged 65 and over needing support in the community is set to rise by around 8% along with the need for older people receiving residential based services increasing by 9%. This looks set to be a continuing trend over the coming years.

Back at the end of 2016 we won the tender to provide housing related support to older people aged 50+ in Torfaen so unsurprisingly the **Supporting People strategy and the accompanying Commissioning Plan** both reference the need for floating support provision for older people across all tenures.

As a result of winning this contract we are set to deliver 350 units of floating support each year for the next four years which will form a key plank of the support elements of our strategy.

In a slightly broader context, the **Gwent Population Needs Assessment May 2017** states three key outcomes around appropriate housing and accommodation for older people, improving emotional well-being for older people by reducing loneliness and social isolation and to improve outcomes for people living with dementia and their carers all of which we would seek to address through this strategy.

The Gwent wide **In One Place programme** through which we have already delivered a new development (at Kennard Court, Blaenavon) brings together health, social care and housing to strategically plan and co-ordinate the provision

⁷ <http://www.torfaenpublicservicesboard.co.uk/en/Documents/Torfaen-Delivery-Plan-Strategy-For-Older-People-Phase-3.pdf>

of high quality housing, health and care solutions provides a great partnership opportunity and access to potential funding for the delivery of our strategy.

The UK context

There is relatively little in terms of UK policy specifically around older people's housing, however, there is arrange of informal guidance, policy and research which has created a sense of what high quality, desirable housing for older people looks like. One of the key aspects of this is the report from the Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI), a panel of 13 sector experts who focused on improving the quality of life for older people, changing the perceptions around mainstream and specialist housing and raise aspirations for a high quality home. The Panel came up with a set of design principles which represent good practice in relation to the design of age friendly housing ⁸

In January 2018 the UK Government have appointed a **Minister for Loneliness**, recognising that a national strategy is needed to combat loneliness which affects up to 9 million people in the UK many who are older people. Appropriate housing, good health and well connected communities are all contributory factors and this strategy through both the bricks and mortar and support elements will help to tackle this serious issue within our community.

5. LINKAGES

'Creating Homes for Life' 2018-2028 – our older person's housing strategy - cannot be viewed in isolation from other strategies which are currently in place and developing.

Our new **Corporate Plan 2018-2023** has key priorities around People, Homes, Communities and Our Business at its centre and this strategy has been developed to address priorities across all aspects of that Plan. As part of that there is a clear link to our plans for future development

Our **Equality and Diversity Strategy 2015-2018** which is currently being refreshed has a clear vision to be a more equal, fair, and socially inclusive organisation, committed to improving quality of life and life chances through integrated, preventative support. This strategy is clear compatible with that vision and the overarching Equalities Impact Assessment commits us to ensuring we undertake an equalities impact assessment of each service change that arises from this strategy.

The delivery of this strategy also has a significant link to **the Inclusion and Support strategy** which is currently being refreshed for the period 2018-2021 and whilst it is recognised that housing solutions feature large in this strategy, the outcomes will not be delivered without the range of tailored, person centred, needs

⁸ <https://www.housinglin.org.uk/Topics/browse/Design-building/HAPPI/>

led support solutions which will assist older people living happily in their homes in a way that supports their well-being and health needs as well as building resilience and independence.

The ***Young Persons' Housing Solutions strategy 2018-2023*** also shares a lot of common ground and a set of key principles with this strategy to the extent that we have developed an over-arching ***Specialist Housing and Support Policy Statement*** which makes the link between the two and identified the shared principles between our approach to both younger and older people and gives us the potential for developing innovative solutions which bring benefit to older and young people alike. There are a number of emerging inter-generational housing schemes around the UK which are bringing significant benefits to those who are living in them and there appears to be an appetite to explore such solutions in Torfaen which we will do as part of bringing this strategy to life

Specialist Housing and Support Policy Statement



6. KEY PRINCIPLES

This strategy is guided by six key principles that were determined by our Board in December 2017:

Choice

- A range of housing options and tenures which are safe, secure, sustainable and affordable
- A menu of support both formal and informal which is needs led, person centred and seeks to build independence and promote health and well-being.

Quality & Brand

- Meets HAPPI⁹ standards where possible, practical and affordable and contributes to well connected, inclusive communities.
- High quality and aspirational housing offer which is clearly defined
- A brand which isn't marketed at 'older people'

Scope

- In property terms there will be a strong focus on the future of our existing retirement housing stock however, general needs properties and stock from future development will remain in scope.
- All actions will be based on solid data and evidence

Partnership & Funding

- Forming partnerships when appropriate to do so
- Maximising external funding opportunities
- Links clearly with Health and Social Care provision locally
- Consider all opportunities to meet the needs of Torfaen more widely
- Contributes to developing strong communities

Ambition

- Addresses the issue around our existing retirement housing stock
- Is flexible to changes in demand
- Is innovative in approach

⁹ [HAPPI standards](#) are recommendations for design of housing for older people. They have their origins in the 2009 report by the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation which contains case studies with details of design features and provide some information about how the schemes are integrated with the wider community.

- Is affordable to the business and for customers
- Is guided by and supportive of local, national and UK policy

Timescale

- 10 year timeframe – the strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and fully refreshed for years 3 and 7 based on changing need and demand.

7. STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

We will create a range of housing solutions across our stock through our new development which are flexible to use for other markets, meets the needs of older people, offers choice, promotes independence and enables older people to stay connected to their networks and services and enjoy a healthy and happy life.

We will do this by:

- Looking across our whole stock as opportunities arise to create affordable housing solutions which may be attractive to and meet the needs of older people.
- Considering the needs of older people in determining the mix and type of housing on each of our new development sites
- Considering a range and type of different tenures to offer the widest possible choice including the promotion of shared housing for older people based on what is feasible and cost effective
- Identify different rent models e.g.: intermediate rent if and when necessary
- Creating a menu of support both formal and informal linking with our Inclusion and Support strategy
- Engage with our partners in Social Care and Health in the delivery and review of this strategy so that we can identify and respond to common goals. e.g.: Intermediate solutions to reduce delayed transfers of care.

We will appraise all our existing retirement housing stock and from this develop a range of solutions which meet the on-going housing needs of the Torfaen community and are financially sustainable for the long term.

We will do this by:

- Recognising that the starting point for these appraisals will be to assess what can feasibly be done to ensure continuing viable use for older people.
- Implementing the approved recommendations for each of the four pilot schemes which have already been appraised.

- Developing an appraisal toolkit based on experience of the 4 pilot retirement housing schemes to apply across all our retirement housing stock taking into account desirability, demand, asset performance, financial viability and development potential.
- Use the outputs from the appraisal process to produce a clear plan for our retirement housing stock based on the most viable option for each scheme.
- Ensuring that communication of this work is timely, meaningful, honest and engages key stakeholders and our tenants at every stage of the process if appropriate.

We will explore opportunities for cohousing and intergenerational living in Torfaen

We will do this by:

- Joining the UK Cohousing Network and researching best practice to build our knowledge
- To explore how we can make our assets available to groups that aspire to set up a cohousing community
- Piloting multigenerational 'scheme-based' living in one of our retirement schemes to assess whether it is a feasible proposition that makes better use of our existing housing for the future benefit of Torfaen's communities

We will create a high quality, aspirational, innovative older persons' housing offer with a distinct brand and reputation for quality and affordability which is attractive to a broad potential customer base

We will do this by:

- Tracking market trends and consumer needs and preference to ensure we're able to flex and refine our product and service offer wherever possible to ensure it continues to add value.
- Consult with older people to understand how we best market our homes to them and tailoring our approach in response where possible
- Develop our standard in line with HAPPI principles which are replicable and affordable for both customers and the business.
- Undertake relevant best practice work linking across to the Young Person's Housing Strategy to inform the development of our housing and support offer for both younger and older customers.

We will take the opportunity to work in partnership with others where it benefits our business and the wider Torfaen community

We will do this by:

- Working in partnership with health, social care and others to deliver solutions that provide improved outcomes for all
- Working through the Public Service Board to ensure fit with the Torfaen Well-being plan objectives
- Proactively looking for alternative and complimentary funding streams for our capital assets and support provision

We will use our knowledge and networks to influence policy and practice

We will do this by:

- Lobbying for change, shaping and influencing policy and practice change
- Sharing our outcomes and experience to promote our approach and practice in older persons' housing
- Being alert to potential changes in local or national policy that may bring about opportunities to influence how supported housing is funded which we should take where appropriate

We will monitor and evaluate the impact of our activities to ensure that they deliver quantifiable benefits for both Bron Afon and the older people we are housing

We will do this by:

- Agreeing evaluation criteria for individual projects and activities in advance, and wherever possible with external evaluation and in conjunction with the people who will benefit from the home or service
- Understanding the true lifetime cost of our activities and properties.
- Continually tracking the impact of our strategic decisions around investment in older people's housing stock investment and use through our asset performance evaluation systems

8. RISKS AND CHALLENGES

Successful delivery of this strategy presents some key risks and challenges:

- **Reputational Risk** – Potential decommissioning of existing Retirement Housing schemes is naturally contentious and needs to be done openly, honestly and fairly. We have positive experience of doing this successfully on other schemes and will ensure that adequate resources are put in to making the process as smooth a transition as possible for residents and their families who are affected by change of any kind.
- **The challenge of an ageing population** – As people live longer we are consistently seeing the pressures on services, particularly Health and Adult Social Care as they work to meet the increasing demands. Our support services feel the pressure of that demand too and we need to ensure that the support we provide is appropriate and complimentary to that provided by statutory agencies.
- **Suitability of existing stock....volume of future stock** – As time goes on our existing general needs stock potentially becomes less and less suitable for an ageing population. We will never be able to build suitable new stock at a rate that means this risk can be mitigated fully.
- **Managing expectations** – We need to ensure that we are clear about what can be delivered within the confines of our available resources. We have already started engaging with our existing and prospective customers and we will continue to do this early in the process of each project or activity so that we have the opportunity to communicate the extent of our plans effectively.
- **Partners' expectations and buy in** – Any change in older people's housing is viewed as potentially contentious and may impact on our relationship with other partners. We need to ensure that partners understand our reasons for taking a different approach and obtain their support through evidence based discussion.
- **Managing conflicting priorities for development sites** – We have an ambitious development target over the next five years that is constrained by site availability. We will need to be clear about our prioritisation of those sites to ensure that we can deliver new homes for older people.
- **Evidencing value for money** – If we pilot alternative construction methods or innovative solutions for older people this may cost more per unit than a traditional build. In adopting HAPPI standards, even in part may make the project more complex or more expensive so we will need to determine how far we go with this on a project by project basis. We may also accept that there may be opportunity cost given that the learning and knowledge from

having undertaken a pilot project which may bring benefit over the long term.

- **The relationship with our lenders and potential funders** – We need to be mindful that any new project meets lender and potential funder requirements. This will require close liaison between the development team and finance.

9. MONITORING PROGRESS AND REPORTING OUTCOMES

The Older Person's Housing Project Team will draw up an annual action plan which feeds into operational service plans.

Progress will be monitored via the Older Persons' Housing Project Board on a quarterly basis using RAG reporting in line with organisational processes for project reporting.

Regular reports will be provided to the Board and Executive Team quarterly and the strategy will be reviewed annually and fully refreshed in years 3 and 7 based on changing need and demand.

We will seek to involve tenants, future tenants and our wider membership in the continued development of actions contained within this strategy to seek their views, listen and ensure we have an informed, inclusive approach to delivering this strategy.

10. EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this strategy¹⁰

¹⁰ EIA - Creating Homes for Life 2018-2028