

Housing for Older People

A submission to the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning & Local Government

25th April 2018

1. Introduction

Clúid Housing is delighted to make a submission to the Joint Committee on Housing, Planning & Local Government on the topic of 'Housing for Older People'. Clúid Housing, which is the largest Approved Housing Body (AHB) in the country, has built up a considerable body of experience and expertise in the area of housing provision for older people over a number of years, both in the area of ensuring that older people receive the care and supports they need to be able to continue to live in mainstream housing; and through the provision of sheltered housing for older people. Further information on both of these is provided within the submission.

1.1. Background context

It is important to state at the outset that Ireland's population of older people is increasing rapidly, and this will present significant health, social and economic challenges. The number of people aged 65 years and over is projected to increase from 638,000 in 2016 to approximately 855,000 by 2026 and close to 1.4 million by 2046¹

¹ CSO, (2013), Population and Labour Force Projections 2016 – 2046, Dublin, CSO. Available at http://www.cso.ie/en/media/csoie/releasesspublications/documents/population/2013/poplabfor2016_2046.pdf



Furthermore the dependency ratio, that is the population aged 65 years and over expressed as a percentage of the population aged 15-64 years, is projected to increase from 20% in 2016 to between 37% and 50% by 2046. So by 2046, half the population could be aged 65 or over.

1.2. Models of housing provision for older people

Policy in relation to housing for older people needs to be guided by the principle of supporting ‘ageing in place’. This well-established concept refers to care and support services that enable older people to continue to live in their own homes, whether they are owned or rented, with as much independence as possible. Ageing in place is a complex process which needs to be able to respond to the ever-changing needs of older people. Enabling and supporting people to stay in their own homes for as long as possible both ensures the best health and social outcomes for older people and avoids the heavy cost of institutional care.

However, for a range of reasons, some older people may not be able to continue to live in their own homes, or they may not wish to.

In those circumstances sheltered housing for older people offers an alternative form of provision. Sheltered housing is housing provision for older people or disabled people which comprises independent, private, self-contained homes, arranged in a group. Residents are supported by an on-site scheme manager and a 24 hour emergency call system. Some sheltered housing schemes include communal spaces such as lounge, community hall, laundry room and gardens.

In this submission, our observations will focus on these two forms of provision:

- Actions that support ‘ageing in place’, i.e. they help older people to stay in their own home for as long as possible, with a particular emphasis on social housing
- The provision of sheltered housing for older people.

It is of course important to emphasise that these two do not describe the totality of provision for older people; they describe the two areas where Clúid has greatest experience.



1.3. Clúid's provision of housing for older people

1.3.1. Ageing in place

Clúid actively supports older tenants to continue to live in their homes for as long as they are able to and wish to do so. Research commissioned by Clúid Housing and published in 2016², *A Home for Life* found that only 15% of Clúid's older tenants living in mainstream housing would like to move. In many cases this was because the location was unsuitable for a range of reasons, and in some cases they felt that their house was unsuitable.

We provide this support in a number of ways:

Design

Clúid's current design guide states "All new housing for Clúid should be reasonably accessible for older people, the very young and people with disabilities and accommodate their changing needs over the life of the dwelling." This means that new dwellings must be designed to comply with the Universal Design Guidelines for Homes in Ireland, published by Centre for Excellence in Universal Design by the National Disability Authority³.

This will ensure that as far as possible dwellings can be easily adapted to accommodate the changing needs of residents as they become older.

Adaptations

A Home for Life, referred to above, provided data about tenants' expressed needs for adaptations in their homes. In many cases these adaptations could be provided for at a very modest cost. For example relatively small changes to bathrooms, such as installing non-slip floors, grab rails, level access showers etc, will increase safety significantly and may be critical elements that enable tenants to continue to stay in their own homes. Another example was that many tenants expressed a desire for a door viewer which they felt would significantly increase their sense of safety. This is a very good example of an extremely cost-effective measure that could play a part in ageing in place.

Support co-ordination service

Clúid's research referred to above, *A Home for Life*, showed that the support needs of tenants in mainstream housing were not being met as comprehensively as were

² Fox, S and Kenny L, (2016), *A Home for Life*, Dublin, Clúid Housing. Available at <https://www.cluid.ie/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/A-HOME-FOR-LIFE-FINAL-28-10-15.pdf>

³ Available at <http://universaldesign.ie>



the needs of tenants in sheltered housing for older people. These needs included, alarms, help with minor repairs and access to social activities such as women's groups, men's sheds or a befriending service. Support co-ordination seemed to be an answer.

A support co-ordination service is a form of structured intervention that aims to ensure that older people receive the care and support they need to enable them to continue to live an independent life in the community for as long as possible. It has much in common with case management and involves an initial assessment of the tenant's needs by a support co-ordination worker, who then sets about sourcing the various supports and services that are needed by the tenant. The support co-ordination worker does not provide services directly her/himself, but obtains and coordinates the services for the tenant.

Support co-ordination has a number of key elements. Firstly, it is a support service which deals with all support issues that may arise. It can deal with complex issues as well as more straightforward ones. Secondly, it is proactive – it seeks to initiate contact with people in the target group through a variety of means, rather than only being reactive to problems as they present themselves. In doing so, it seeks to prevent crises from occurring that may threaten tenancy and housing arrangements, finances and the health and wellbeing of the client. Thirdly, it is a planned service, i.e. it has a set of procedures and policies that are based on an assessment of needs and a set of time limited interventions. Finally, it is a service that is personalised, i.e. it is provided by a single individual (giving continuity of service) according to a plan that is generated on the basis of the needs assessment.

Clúid Housing in partnership with ALONE⁴ ran a pilot support co-ordination service for 6 months in 2016. An independent evaluation assessed the pilot to have been very successful.

Clúid Housing strongly supports the further development of support co-ordination services. The provision of these services is not an area of our expertise, so we do not anticipate operating this function ourselves; furthermore, the demand for a support co-ordination service from Clúid tenants would not be enough to support a national service. However we believe that a national service providing supports to older people in all housing tenures could play a critical role in assisting people to continue to live an independent life in the community, and would in addition be extremely cost-effective by preventing or delaying tenants' move into extremely expensive institutional care.

⁴ ALONE supports older people to age at home through a range of actions. www.alone.ie



1.3.2. Sheltered housing for older people

As stated above, sheltered housing for older people is housing provision which comprises independent, private, self-contained homes, arranged in a group. Residents are supported by an on-site scheme manager and a 24 hour emergency call system. Some sheltered housing schemes include communal spaces such as lounge / community hall, laundry room and gardens.

Clúid owns and manages 16 sheltered housing schemes, providing 625 homes for older people. It leases a further 3 sheltered housing schemes from local authorities which provide another 81 homes.

A *Home for Life*, referred to above, found that 91% of sheltered housing residents were completely satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their decision to move into sheltered housing

2. What policy structures are in place currently to meet the needs of housing for older persons?

2.1. Policies relating to ageing in place

A number of grants are available that assist in helping residents to stay in their own homes. These include: energy efficiency grants; housing repair grants; and housing adaptation grants for people with disabilities (adapted bathrooms, building accessibility). In addition the HSE provides many community-based services to older people such as nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and day care services. A Home Care Package is a set of services which provide additional help to assist an older person to be cared for in their own home. These might include additional home help hours, nursing services and therapy services. Technical services such as alarm systems and telecare, have the potential to greatly support independence.

2.2. Policies relating to sheltered housing for older people

Funding through the Capital Assistance Scheme and loan finance through CALF and Payment and Availability Agreements are available for capital funding for the construction of sheltered housing for older people.

Sheltered housing residents may also of course receive peripatetic community based services from the HSE.



Sheltered housing residents in older dwellings may also be entitled to grants for carrying out adaptations that will bring the housing up to standard.

3. Are the structures currently in place, whether financially or programme led, sufficient in meeting the needs of older people?

Cluid helps residents with the process of applying for home adaptation grants and co-ordinating the work to adapt their homes as their needs change. The demand is predominantly level access bathrooms. This work is carried out in some of the older sheltered housing schemes which were not built to universal design standards and also in general needs housing occupied by older people. The present scheme is over administrative, and the arrangements vary between local authorities. The process is daunting for older people who are disabled or unwell. It is often slow. The requirement to pay the VAT on the works and claim it back from revenue isn't a realistic option for many older people on fixed retirement incomes. A streamlined system which allows some flexibility in anticipating changing needs would be helpful in assisting older tenants to continue to live an independent life in the community.

4. In relation to independent living for older persons, what blockages are in the system to impede the delivery of a successful independent model of housing for older persons?

As described above, the process for applying for grant assistance for adaptations is inconsistent and over-complicated, and there are frequently long delays. The demand for HSE community-based services far exceeds the supply.

The operation of the Capital Assistance Scheme, which is one of the capital funding schemes for sheltered housing is frequently subject to very long delays.

5. In relation to models of housing for older persons, are there any examples of best practice in this area?

Cluid Housing's new sheltered housing scheme Broome Lodge, in Cabra, Dublin 7, represents, we believe, an example of best practice in sheltered housing. This new build scheme provides 43 new homes in one and two bedroom apartments for people over 55. The site offers easy and convenient access to public transport, shops, cafes, the post office and a church. It is staffed part time by a Housing worker.



The scheme has a mix of homes which are open plan and homes with separate living and kitchen areas. The scheme is built to universal design standards which aim to enable people to stay in their home for as long as they wish. The benefits of a universal design approach are:

- Elimination of need for retrofitting;
- Elimination of adaptation costs;
- Residents can remain in their own home for longer;
- Reduction in the capital cost of disability grants;
- Less need for support services;
- Greater independence for residents.

All apartments are level access, self-contained units with no internal steps. Home design will play a key role in supporting Broome Lodge residents in maintaining their independence if their care and support needs change and prevent them from entering into nursing / residential care prematurely.

The scheme has an attractive communal space for residents to meet. It is designed to support an appropriate range of activities and is now serving the locality as a wider community hub.

The scheme provides communal garden areas, with raised beds, and an internal courtyard for residents to sit out and enjoy. Semi enclosed balconies or patio areas provide a practical, easily maintained substitute for a private garden. They provide outdoor space which is fully accessible from the home which is very valuable for people who leave their home less frequently.

6. Could you outline the future requirements for older persons in order for their housing needs to be met?

The population projections referred to in section 1.1. above show that the population of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase by a third over the next 8 years, and to double over the next 25 years. Thus the demand for ageing in place services and the demand for sheltered housing for older people can be expected to increase correspondingly.

There is already a shortage of services available to support ageing in place, as detailed above, and the demand for sheltered housing is growing steadily.



It is vitally important that provision is made now for the anticipated increased demand for these housing services. Failure to do this will result on further pressure on institutional care which is already over-stretched.

If you need any further information, please contact Simon Brooke, Head of Policy, Clúid Housing. sbrooke@cluid.ie

Clúid Housing
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