**Submission to the call for contributions on older persons and the right to housing – 2022 GA report**

**About Anchor**

Anchor began more almost 60 years ago and today is England’s largest not-for-profit provider of housing and care for people in later life.

It provides retirement housing to rent and to buy, retirement villages and residential care homes, including specialist dementia care. In total, Anchor serves more than 65,000 residents in 54,000 homes across almost 1,700 locations. Its residential care services employ the majority of the 9,000-strong workforce, providing services to residents at 114 care homes.

Anchor operates in more than 85% of local councils in England.

For more information visit: [www.anchor.org.uk](http://www.anchor.org.uk)

1. **The challenges faced by older people in accessing suitable housing**
   1. Anchor’s research for our 2022 report [*Fragmented UK*](https://anchorv3dev.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents-pdfs/Anchor%20Fragmented%20UK%20report.pdf), has shown that 80% of people in the UK, across all age groups, state that they do not fully understand the housing options available to them in later life. As our population ages and an increasing number of older people consider their housing options, it is vital that information is made available to help people to make the decisions which are right for them at the right time.

* 1. We are calling on health and social care services in the UK to be able to signpost to resources and information to support older people’s decision making on their housing options.

* 1. Our research has shown that where understanding exists, demand follows. Of those aged over-55 in the UK, 35% stated that they would be very or quite likely to consider specialist older people’s housing.
  2. What is clear is that supply is failing to keep up with demand. Only 0.6% of over-65s in the UK live in specialist retirement properties and [research](https://content.knightfrank.com/research/1698/documents/en/retirement-living-comes-of-age-2018-6107.pdf) from Knight Frank shows there are only 720,000 retirement housing units in the country. Over the past decade, around [7,000 new units](https://www.arcouk.org/sites/default/files/Too%20little%20too%20late__FINAL%20-%20June%20%202020_0.pdf) of retirement housing have been delivered each year in the UK compared to [potential demand of around 30,000](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/OtherOrganisation/KF_Retirement_Housing_2016.pdf).
  3. Anchor is clear that a number of steps can be taken to ensure policy better engages with older people and helps to unlock investment and development in the sector. Further details of our proposals are outlined in **Section 2**.

1. **Participation of older people in the development of action plans, policies or legislation related to housing**
   1. For many years, Anchor has called for more extensive engagement and consideration to be given to older people’s housing needs in local decision making in the UK.
   2. [*Fragmented UK*](https://anchorv3dev.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents-pdfs/Anchor%20Fragmented%20UK%20report.pdf) highlights a disparity across the UK with regards to what older people want from later life compared to what younger people believe they will want. Our research found that 54% of 18 – 34-year-olds in the UK believe that their parents will want a family member to provide care for them in later life whereas only 16% of over-55s said they would want this.
   3. The report calls for a National Conversation within families and across UK society to better enable older people and their loved ones to meet their expectations and desires of later life. *Fragmented UK* also recommends a number of changes to the UK planning system to enhance the development of older people’s housing through a designated planning classification for older people’s housing and for local authorities to reflect the housing needs of older residents in their local plans.
   4. These steps will help to engage older people in local decision making and enable them to better understand the expectations and desires of those in later life.
   5. Anchor’s 2019 [manifesto](https://anchorv3dev.s3.eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/documents-pdfs/Progamme%20for%20Change_Anchor%20Hanover.V2.0.pdf) also calls for a UN Convention on the Rights of Older People with access to suitable housing at its heart. We are continuing to call for the older people’s housing sector, the UK government and older people to help shape the UK’s contribution to this.
2. **The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on older persons’ right to suitable housing and measures to minimize its impact**
   1. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of the home environment on older people’s physical and mental health and wellbeing. Specialist older people’s housing can help to head off crises which can lead to injury and health problems which would require a higher degree of health and social care intervention, and help to stave off loneliness and isolation.
   2. [A report from St Monica Trust](https://www.housinglin.org.uk/_assets/Resources/Housing/Support_materials/Reports/RE-COV-Study-SUMMARY-REPORT.pdf), funded by Dunhill Medical Trust and supported by the Housing LIN found that retirement communities providers in the UK were successful in protecting their residents and staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.
   3. The report highlights how 0.97% of retirement community residents died of confirmed COVID-19 between March and December 2020 compared with 1.09% of the same age profile living in the general population.
   4. Measures such as increased cleaning and closure of communal areas helped to control the spread of COVID-19. Purpose built self-contained housing also helped residents to isolate in a safer, more manageable home environment.
   5. Providers also took steps to support residents and help to alleviate loneliness. A number of the steps taken by Anchor were as follows:

* **Community Support Plans**

Our Community Support Plans took place at all our schemes which identified vulnerable residents who require assistance with day-to-day tasks such as shopping and accessing services as well as those impacted by mental health issues and loneliness. Through partnerships with local authorities and local services, we were able to establish volunteer services to provide these residents with the help they needed.

* Signposting Support Service

This was established to help Anchor colleagues to research local services and voluntary organisations which could provide the required assistance as part of the Community Support Plans.

* **Residents’ Coronavirus website area**

Our Residents’ Coronavirus website area was created to provide support and information for our residents who are online. This gave information on the latest government guidance, how to register as ‘extremely vulnerable’ or as a volunteer with the NHS and information on Anchor services throughout the pandemic.

This also directed residents to our BeWise service which provides financial advice including information on benefits. Anchor has experienced a significant increase in Universal Credit claims since the start of the pandemic.

* **Stay Connected**

Our Stay Connected initiative supported residents to remain in touch with their families and friends. Anchor purchased and loaned 250 tablets set up with websites and apps to support communication between residents and their loved ones.

This programme proved to be extremely successful and popular with residents, with over 350 taking part and 98% of residents involved said that having the devices improved their mental health and wellbeing.

* **BeSupportive**

Linking with our Community Support Plans, our BeSupportive scheme established a telephone befriending service, helping to reduce the impact of social isolation on residents. At its height the service was supporting around 800 residents and Anchor has now partnered with Re-engage who provide these calls after we have referred residents to them.

Residents in receipt of these calls also received digital wellbeing packsincluding how to access the latest Coronavirus advice and tips about what you can do if you are feeling lonely.

We were also able to share the Royal British Legion VE Day and VJ Day activity packs and celebrations with these residents.

* **Community Grants Fund**

Anchor uses money donated by residents to offer a fund to encourage activities and initiatives that support health and wellbeing with a panel of residents agreeing how this funding should be distributed.

During the pandemic, the criteria were changed to make it easier to apply for support initiatives that responded to the loneliness and social isolation.

* **Supporting our services**

At our retirement and Extra Care housing schemes, we have supported our services to reopen in a safe manner in line with government guidance. When permitted, we were able to reopen communal lounges, restaurants, hairdressers and therapy services in a safe and compliant way.

* **Food support**

In our Extra Care services, we established a comprehensive, Covid-19 secure meal delivery system working across all teams and local commissioners to ensure that all residents had access to one healthy cooked meal per day.Frozen ready meals were also made available where providers were unable to operate a catering concession.

Our residents with higher needs such as dementia, who may otherwise have become malnourished, were able to eat in a Covid-19 secure dining environmentwhere activity packs were supplied for those using the dining area.