



Cheshire West & Chester Council

Vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan

2016 - 2020



Building futures, opening doors



Cheshire West
and Chester

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Foreword

Welcome to the vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan for Cheshire West and Chester.

The Council's vision is to help the borough's residents and communities to thrive; in order to do this, we must ensure that our local communities are resilient and sustainable and that our residents are happy, healthy and able to fulfil their potential.

Accommodation is inextricably linked to health and wellbeing; poor housing conditions can contribute to physical and mental health problems and people without a home experience some of the worst health inequalities of all. A safe, warm and well-designed home provides the best start in life for children, enables those leaving hospital to return home sooner and helps older and disabled people to be able to maintain their independence and stay in their own home for longer.

Providing access to suitable and sustainable accommodation that meets the needs of the individual thus helps to promote improved health and wellbeing outcomes, as well as meeting housing need and promoting independence.

Whilst the majority of our residents are currently well-housed, in good quality, well-designed homes that they can afford, there are still challenges to be met. Older people may find themselves struggling to keep their home in good repair as they age and those with disabilities or other life-limiting conditions can find it difficult to access appropriate and sustainable accommodation that meets their needs.

We know that we need to promote the delivery of more new homes in the borough in general, especially new affordable homes, but we need to make sure that these homes are well-designed, of high quality, are sustainable and meet the needs of our diverse population.

This accommodation plan sets out our aims for meeting the accommodation needs of older and vulnerable people living in the borough for the period to 2020.

It has been developed through our multi-agency housing and health group, a sub-group of the health and wellbeing board and has been shaped through consultation with stakeholders and key partners including our strategic housing partnership, colleagues in strategic commissioning, social care, health, children's services and leaving care, local residents, voluntary and community groups and groups representing the range of needs existing within our diverse population.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who took the time to contribute to the consultation; the feedback we received helped us to better understand the issues affecting our vulnerable and older residents and their housing needs and aspirations.

We face significant challenges in delivering this accommodation plan, however, not least due to the uncertain economic climate and continuing public sector spending cuts; we have witnessed unprecedented housing market conditions across the UK in recent years, resulting in a much lower rate of housing development and the biggest changes to the country's welfare system for decades. These changes will have a profound impact, not only on the ability of local people to access and maintain accommodation, but on the resources available to us and to our partners to deliver this accommodation plan.

It is clear that we cannot deliver our ambitions to improve housing outcomes for the borough's older and vulnerable people alone and this plan sets out how we will work with our partners in the housing sector, including registered providers, developers and care providers and with our colleagues in commissioning, health and social care to support the provision of the accommodation that local people need.

Together we can deliver better housing outcomes for all of Cheshire West and Chester's residents, helping them to live healthier and more independent lives and ensuring that the borough and its residents continue to thrive.

1. Introduction

This vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan covers the period 2016 – 2020. It is intended to provide a clear statement of the Council's vision and priorities for accommodation for vulnerable and older people living in the borough during that period.

The plan sets out the key drivers and issues affecting the borough's diverse communities and what the Council intends to do to help overcome these challenges and promote the provision of a range of suitable accommodation options for vulnerable and older residents. Ultimately, it will result in local people living healthier and more independent lives, helping to ensure that the borough and its residents continue to thrive.

The plan is the culmination of many months of work and active engagement, which included a review of the supply of and demand for accommodation for older and vulnerable people living in the borough, research into anticipated demographic change and consultation with partners in housing, social care and health, as well as service users and local residents.

It is important to note that, whilst this accommodation plan is principally concerned with the provision of appropriate housing and other accommodation to enable vulnerable and older people to live healthier and more independent lives, in many cases, accommodation is only one part of the solution and vulnerable and older people require a co-ordinated response from a number of agencies and a range of support services. This is why it is so important that there is a joined-up approach across service areas and with our partners to provide co-ordinated and integrated solutions.

It is also important to note that there are several inter-connected strategies and policies already in place within the Council that will support the delivery of the aims of this accommodation plan and vice versa. Where this is the case, to avoid unnecessary duplication, this accommodation plan will summarise the key points of interest, but will signpost to the relevant strategy or policy for further detail.

2. Scope

This plan is primarily aimed at helping to meet the accommodation needs of individuals with disabilities, low level health issues or other life limiting conditions that are able to live independently in the community, or with low level support, but who may have difficulty in accessing suitable and sustainable accommodation in the borough. This includes housing with support and extra care type accommodation (which provides a self-contained home with on-site care and support).

It is not intended to demonstrate the need for specialist accommodation such as nursing homes or residential care homes, which are the most intensive forms of accommodation with care, needed by those individuals with very acute needs that cannot live safely on their own.

We recognise that vulnerable people do not exist as a homogenous group, but comprise a range of individuals with different needs and aspirations. For ease of reference, however, this accommodation plan is intended to meet accommodation needs relating to the following primary client groups:

- Older people
- People with learning disabilities, including autism spectrum disorders
- People with mental health issues
- Care leavers
- People misusing drugs and/ or alcohol
- People with physical and/ or sensory disabilities
- People affected by domestic abuse
- People who are homeless or threatened with homelessness
- Gypsies and Travellers.

It is acknowledged that there is often substantial cross-over between groups (e.g. dementia, which could be categorised both as an issue affecting older people and as a mental health issue) and that individuals may possess attributes from more than one client group or other issues impacting on their health and wellbeing (e.g. people affected by homelessness may also have mental health issues and/ or be affected by substance misuse).

It is important to keep in mind that it is the needs of the individual that are paramount and the suitability and sustainability of accommodation should always be considered in light of meeting those individual needs.

There are already strategies in place to support many of these cohorts, including a homelessness strategy, domestic abuse strategy and autism strategy, as well as associated plans which will benefit many of the individuals concerned, such as our affordable warmth and rural housing strategies.

This accommodation plan does not seek to duplicate any of the priorities and actions already being taken forward through these strategies, but it aims to support and complement work already underway, ensure that the needs of those groups that are not covered elsewhere are not overlooked and to support a co-ordinated approach to the provision of appropriate accommodation and related services.

3. Aims

The aims of this accommodation plan are to:

- Describe the accommodation issues affecting older and vulnerable people living in the borough
- Identify ways in which we can work with our partners to improve housing outcomes for older and vulnerable people and
- Help to ensure that everyone living in the borough is able to thrive by promoting the opportunity to access a safe, sustainable and suitable home that meets their needs.

It will answer the following questions:

- Why do we need a vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan?
- What are the key priorities?
- Where have these priorities come from?
- How will we achieve our aim to improve housing outcomes for vulnerable and older people living in the borough?

4. Why do we need a vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan?

The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines 'health' as:

A state of complete physical, mental and social wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

The quality of housing and accommodation that vulnerable and older people live in is fundamental to their health; poor housing conditions can contribute to physical and mental health problems and people without a home experience some of the worst health inequalities of all. A lack of stable accommodation can make it difficult to access training and employment and can contribute to the cycle of repeated homelessness experienced by some of our most vulnerable residents.

A safe, warm and well-designed home enables those leaving hospital to return home sooner and, with appropriate support, means that older and disabled people can continue to maintain their independence and stay in their own home for as long as is possible, or for as long as they wish to. For young people, a stable home environment encourages independence and self-reliance and increases self-esteem, which can lead to the individual obtaining training, employment or volunteering, further improving self-confidence and wellbeing.

Housing must therefore be recognised as both a key driver of health inequalities and also as a major force in improving health outcomes.

The ideal home environment can¹:

- Protect and improve health and wellbeing and prevent physical and mental ill-health
- Enable people to manage their health and care needs more effectively, including long-term conditions, and ensure positive care experiences by integrating services in the home
- Allow people to remain in their own home for as long as they choose or are able to
- Delay and reduce the need for primary care and social care interventions, including admission to long-term care settings
- Prevent hospital admissions
- Enable timely discharge from hospital and prevent re-admissions and
- Enable rapid recovery from periods of ill-health or planned hospital admissions.

The Care Act 2014 places a duty on the Council provide or arrange for the provision of services, facilities or resources, or take other steps, which it considers will:

¹ Memorandum of understanding to support joint action on improving health through the home, Public Health England, December 2014

- Contribute towards preventing or delaying the development by adults in its area of needs for care and support
- Contribute towards preventing or delaying the development by carers in its area of needs for support
- Reduce the needs for care and support of adults in its area
- Reduce the needs for support of carers in its area.

The Act makes clear that housing is a key element in meeting this duty and it has brought about many changes in the way that the Council considers accommodation as part of a holistic care package for those with disabilities and long-term health issues.

The strategic commissioning plan (2014) sets out the approach that the Council will take to the delivery of social care and health services for the borough's residents, based on four key tenets:

- Interaction: aims include improved information and advice, creating dementia-friendly communities, tackling social isolation and supporting residents to play a more active role in managing their own care through the use of direct payments
- Innovation: this includes increased use of telecare services and home adaptations
- Investment: this involves better management of services, providers and markets to ensure the provision of high quality services that provide value for money
- Integration: continue to work alongside partner organisations to provide seamless care to local people and take advantage of opportunities to reduce duplication and achieve economies of scale.

A joined-up approach to housing delivery and housing and care services can therefore help to promote the best possible home environment and ensure that everyone living in the borough has a safe, warm, suitable and sustainable home that meets their needs and helps them to thrive. Further, by working together in a more joined-up way across the health, housing and social care sectors, we can ensure that we maximise the resources available to us to drive delivery of our shared objectives.

Whilst the majority of the borough's residents are able to meet their own housing needs, either by buying or renting a home on the open market, those with disabilities, life-limiting illnesses or other issues that impact on their day-to-day lives may find it difficult to access and maintain a suitable and sustainable home.

Government research² shows that, compared to their peers, households containing one or more vulnerable individuals are:

- More likely to be in housing need
- More likely to be living in homes that are not suitable for their needs
- Less likely to be able to afford to access home ownership and
- Less likely to be able to move to a more suitable home or to buy in the support that they require to continue to live independently.

We all have preferences and aspirations when it comes to how we want to live. We may prefer to live alone, with a partner or with friends, close to family members, or in a certain location and we believe that everybody should be able to make these same choices, regardless of age, disability or other issues affecting their day-to-day lives.

However, these choices and aspirations must be tempered by what is realistic, including what is affordable and practicable. We know that the majority of people living in the borough would like to own their own home, but this is simply not a realistic option for many households, so it is important that there is a range of other options available, to enable those who are able to live independently, with support if needed, to make an informed decision and to be able to exercise real choice in accessing accommodation that meets their needs.

A lack of stable accommodation can be a barrier to accessing training and employment, which can also impact negatively on an individual's mental health and wellbeing. Encouraging self-reliance and promoting independent living wherever possible contributes towards increasing confidence and self-esteem, helping to improve mental and emotional wellbeing, as well as physical health outcomes. It also reduces the likelihood of unnecessary admissions to hospital or residential care, minimising the need to place vulnerable and older individuals in institutional settings, thus reducing costs to the public purse, a key consideration in the current economic climate and in the context of increasing public sector cuts.

Although research that informed this accommodation plan³ shows that there is only a modest increase anticipated in the numbers of people living in the borough from the majority of the cohorts listed in section two, accommodation for older people presents a particular challenge for the borough going forward, as population forecasts show that our community is ageing significantly.

² Disability facts and figures, Office for Disability Issues and Department for Work and Pensions

³ Vulnerable and older people's accommodation review, Cheshire West and Chester Council, 2015

The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to grow by around 11% and the number of those aged 85 and over is expected to increase by 22.5% by 2022. The borough's rural localities are anticipated to see the biggest rise in the number of people aged 85 and above, increasing from 2,700 in 2012 to 4,100 by 2022 but, proportionately, a significant rise in the number of older residents is expected in all localities.

This increase in the number of older and potentially frail elderly people living in the borough is likely to correspond with increasing numbers of people suffering from age-related health problems and dementia. This will undoubtedly mean increasing pressure on relevant accommodation and support services for those affected.

Our ageing population reflects national demographic trends and it is increasingly being recognised that demand for housing is likely to change as the population ages. Ensuring that the housing supply is fit for purpose for older people however, will also benefit other vulnerable groups, particularly those with physical disabilities, mobility issues or other life limiting conditions.

For example, a recent report⁴ makes clear that housing can significantly improve health in later life and highlights the following key issues as being critical in this respect:

- Designing flexibility and adaptability into new homes, so that they will continue to meet the needs of occupants as they age
- Supporting the adaptation of existing housing stock and
- Ensuring a ready supply of suitable alternative accommodation that older people are easily able to move to.

These three aims will not only support improved health and wellbeing for older people, however, but if the third point is widened to include an appropriate range of accommodation to meet the diverse needs of our community as a whole, they will also promote the same outcomes for vulnerable individuals, regardless of age.

There are significant challenges in delivering new homes of any type in the borough given the current economic circumstances, however; we have witnessed unprecedented housing market conditions across the UK in recent years, resulting in the lowest rate of development for decades and the scale of public sector spending cuts continues to have a profound impact, not only on local people's ability to access and maintain suitable accommodation, but on the resources available to the Council and its partners to facilitate the delivery of appropriate new homes and support for our residents.

⁴ Future of an ageing population, Government Office for Science, 2016

To achieve our aim of promoting a thriving borough through improving health and wellbeing outcomes and supporting independence through a suitable and sustainable housing offer, we must maximise existing partnerships and develop innovative new relationships and ways of working, to drive delivery of the homes that local people need.

5. What are our vision and key priorities for accommodation for vulnerable and older people living in the borough?

5.1 Vision

Our vision for the vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan reflects the Council's wider strategic aims and other local and national priorities:

Older and vulnerable people living in the borough are supported to thrive by a suitable range of accommodation that helps them to live healthier lives and maintain their independence and wellbeing.

5.2 Priorities:

Priority one: increasing the supply of suitable accommodation – promote the delivery of more suitable, sustainable and accessible accommodation that meets the anticipated needs of older and vulnerable people living in the borough.

Priority two: planning policy and design – planning policy and the design of new homes supports older and vulnerable people to live healthier lives and maintain their independence and wellbeing.

Priority three: supporting health and independence – the right range of accommodation and services is available to support older and vulnerable people to live healthier lives and maintain independence and wellbeing.

Priority four: further developing the evidence base – robust evidence is available to inform future policy and delivery plans.

Priority one: increasing the supply of suitable accommodation – promote the delivery of more suitable, sustainable and accessible accommodation that meets the anticipated needs of older and vulnerable people living in the borough.

We understand that people prize their independence and want to remain in their own home for as long as possible. Sometimes, however, the best option for an individual to maintain the highest possible degree of independence and maintain or improve their quality of life is to move to alternative accommodation that is more suited to their needs.

This means that, to help our communities to thrive, it is vital that there is an appropriate range and choice of different housing options available in the borough, that meet varying levels of need and support people to live as independently as possible.

We are already working with our partners to promote and facilitate the delivery of new accommodation that supports older and vulnerable people to live healthier and more independent lives. This includes the delivery of both purpose-built extra care accommodation and new general needs housing that is able to be easily adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities and to accommodate the changing needs of occupants as they age.

One of the ways we will do this is through encouraging the delivery of new home design that is flexible enough to be easily adapted to meet the changing needs of its occupants (see section on priority two: planning policy and design), but could also include promoting the development of additional extra care schemes or bungalows on suitable sites and where there is evidence of need for these types of accommodation in the local area.

Extra care accommodation provides a self-contained home with on-site care and support, plus a range of facilities designed to help people to maintain their independence for as long as possible; the level of care provision is flexible and can be varied to meet the changing needs of individuals as required. The Council has recently completed an extra care development programme providing over 400 units of extra care accommodation for the borough's older people. It is recommended that the Council undertakes a survey of the occupants of these new homes, to determine whether the accommodation successfully meets their needs, to identify what works well and what can be improved to inform future delivery programmes.

The Council has also been successful in gaining approval for a development programme of 230 new affordable homes for the borough, to be funded through an increase in borrowing in the Council's housing revenue account (HRA). Around ten per cent of these new homes will be built to the higher

'Category 2' standard of current Building Regulations (largely equating to the old lifetime homes standard) and there is the potential for a proportion of these units to be built to fully wheelchair accessible standards, where there is a local need identified.

The Council's housing and health group, which is a sub-group of the health and wellbeing board and which has been instrumental in developing this accommodation plan, already has an existing mechanism to share and record information regarding approaches from developers and care providers wishing to develop accommodation for older and vulnerable people living in the borough. This enables the group to monitor the location, type and number of units of this type of accommodation in West Cheshire to help inform future planning and policy direction.

It is recommended that this mechanism be extended to establish a sub-group with a specific focus on new development, working with colleagues from relevant service areas, developers, registered providers and care providers, to foster a more strategic approach to the delivery of accommodation for vulnerable and older people living in the borough, enabling the Council and its partners to give a clear steer on the type and location of new homes that are needed, based on the evidence available. Comprehensive and robust information on current needs and buy-in from partners and from colleagues within the Council will be critical to the success of this proposal.

Members of the housing and health group also attend the ageing well working group, ensuring strong links with local health partners. This promotes two-way communication between the two groups, which have many common aims, including improving health and quality of life outcomes for older people and supporting older people to maintain their independence. In this way, health partners are kept abreast of potential new developments in the borough, which helps with capacity planning for local health provision and are able to provide feedback on any relevant issues and priorities impacting on the provision of appropriate accommodation.

In light of the current economic circumstances and ongoing welfare reforms, particularly the proposal to extend the cap on housing benefits to the local housing allowance (LHA) rate for new social sector tenants, funding new supported housing schemes is likely to become increasingly challenging going forward and we will do all we can to support and promote the delivery of affordable new homes for our older and vulnerable residents.

Increasing the supply of suitable and sustainable accommodation for older and vulnerable people is not just about delivering new homes, however; it also includes making sure that existing stock is brought up to a sufficient standard of quality and accessibility to increase the range and choice of accommodation available to our older and vulnerable residents.

The provision of adaptations and assistance to help people to stay in their own homes, where this is the most suitable option for them, is one way of ensuring that their accommodation meets their individual needs and this is covered under the section on priority three: supporting health and independence.

There are also a number of actions in the borough's new private rented sector housing plan that will help to improve the housing conditions experienced by vulnerable people living in private rented homes, including:

- Reduce the number of non-decent homes containing vulnerable households
- Establish protocols to ensure quality of housing for vulnerable clients when placed by the Council and its partners
- Introduce an enhanced bond guarantee scheme for accredited landlords that re-house excluded or vulnerable groups
- Work with landlords to deliver new housing initiatives such as house share and move on accommodation
- Introduce proactive enforcement for priority neighbourhoods.
- Run an awareness campaign for tenants living in housing in disrepair to get in touch.

Increasing affordability constraints mean increasing difficulty in accessing suitable accommodation, especially for the borough's young people and shared housing is likely to be the only affordable option for many of those under the age of 35. This is not a suitable option for everyone and would need to be carefully managed if it were to be promoted as a formal housing option in the borough.

Shared housing can be very successful for some vulnerable young people, however, offering a stepping stone to independence. Shared housing offers the advantage of peer support and the opportunity to gain the lifeskills needed to live independently, whilst still being able to access support and advice when needed and help to access training and employment. There are existing shared housing schemes within the borough that have proved highly successful and which provide an example of good practice that partners are encouraged to learn from.

Increasing access to suitable accommodation for the most vulnerable members of our society must also include helping those excluded from social housing waiting lists and those who are capable of living independently, but are unable to leave supported accommodation because of affordability constraints.

One of the suggestions we received from the consultation on the draft accommodation plan was to establish a housing panel, involving registered providers with stock in the borough, West Cheshire Homes and council staff, to review the housing needs of those living in supported accommodation who are excluded or finding it difficult to access a suitable home. This is currently under consideration and is being explored with partner registered providers.

It should be noted that it is anticipated that this panel mechanism would only be triggered by a small number of individuals, as the integrated early support scheme currently being piloted for adults with complex needs delivers a multi-agency response which includes housing provision, so only those individuals that cannot be accommodated through this process would need to be referred to the housing panel.

Other sources of funding may be made available for the delivery of adapted accommodation or delivery of schemes aimed at specific cohorts in the future and the Council will seek to take advantage of these wherever possible. For example, the Council supported a successful bid by a partner registered provider to the Department of Health's care and support specialist housing fund in 2015 to deliver ten units of single-person accommodation for people with mental health issues in the borough, aimed at supporting them to achieve and maintain independent living. The Council will continue to work with partners to identify any future funding opportunities.

The Council is also working with a social property investment fund to establish the viability of a build and lease arrangement to provide affordable rented accommodation and/ or extra care accommodation in the borough in the future.

Priority two: planning policy and design – planning policy and the design of new homes supports older and vulnerable people to live healthier lives and maintain their independence and wellbeing.

The borough's local plan provides the overarching strategic spatial framework for all new development in the borough, including new housing development.

Part one of the local plan was adopted in January 2015 and sets out the broad planning policy framework for the borough. The policies comprised in part two of the local plan will provide more detailed guidance on new housing development and these policies are currently being drafted.

These part two policies, when adopted, will contain guidance relating to the provision of new homes in the borough, which could include promoting health and wellbeing on new developments and potentially, more specific guidance around the design of new accommodation to ensure it is suited to meeting the needs of older and vulnerable people.

It is essential that the policies in the local plan reflect the evidenced need for a range of suitable and sustainable accommodation for both vulnerable and older people in the borough and the Council's housing and health group has been instrumental in helping to develop these new policies to this point.

Ensuring that housing design is flexible enough to be easily adapted to meet the changing needs of occupants over time does not have to involve expensive additions or major structural changes. It can be as simple as ensuring that staircases are straight and that a power point is installed at the bottom so that a stairlift can be easily installed, that doorframes are wide enough to allow for wheelchair access, that there is sufficient turning space in rooms and halls or corridors for wheelchair users and that there is a ground floor WC/ shower room capable of being turned into a wet room.

Policy SOC3 of part one of the local plan sets out the overarching guidance relating to the housing mix and type of new homes to be provided in the borough and paves the way for the inclusion of policies around lifetime homes and dementia friendly design. In the explanatory notes supporting the policy, it states:

Proposals for new housing should take account of the needs of that particular area and especially of:

- The provision of small family homes to assist households into home ownership and for older people who may wish to downsize
- The provision of a range of accommodation types to meet the long term needs of older people; this could include the provision of Lifetime Homes, bungalows and extra care housing

To further contribute to the Council's aim of promoting thriving local communities, the housing and health group is keen to ensure that planning policy supports broader health and wellbeing principles through inclusive design, particularly on large scale developments.

The principles of inclusive design aim to ensure that all buildings and their surrounding environments are accessible to everyone, irrespective of age or ability, through:

- Appropriate space for people regardless of body size, posture and mobility
- Minimal physical strength and economy of effort needed to navigate the environment
- Ease of use, comprehension and understanding regardless of physical or cognitive abilities
- A safe, comfortable and healthy environment that minimises hazards.

Environments should be designed to encourage healthy activities such as walking and cycling and should comprise greenspaces open to local communities such as parks and allotments.

A joined-up approach to the provision of new development and associated local environment that encourages people to get outdoors and be more active not only promotes a healthier lifestyle and better mental health, but helps to combat social isolation, a key issue affecting our older residents and vulnerable individuals.

The Council already has a dementia strategy in place and the housing and health group is committed to developing a knowledge base of good practice relating to dementia friendly housing to guide new developments. Dementia friendly design elements include:

- Legible public spaces that give clues to help people with dementia understand where they are, what is expected of them in that space and which way they need to go to access other areas
- Wide, short corridors with no dead ends or blind bends, gentle gradients where a change of floor level is unavoidable, non-slip flooring and easily visible handrails
- Lots of natural light and views/ access to safe and interesting outdoor spaces and
- Distinction between different rooms and spaces within private accommodation e.g. clear demarcation of living room and kitchen area.

These design elements are not only beneficial for dementia sufferers, however, but can have an equally positive impact on other vulnerable groups, particularly those with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders.

The housing learning and improvement network has produced a valuable self-assessment toolkit aimed at helping organisations to ensure that they have the right framework in place to support those with dementia, their families and carers, to have as good a quality of life as possible.

The toolkit assesses the delivery of an integrated approach to prevention and support for dementia sufferers and the housing and health group will work closely with the borough's dementia sub group to complete the self-assessment exercise, to identify any weaknesses in our approach and make recommendations for improvement.

The housing and health group will continue to be involved in developing the local plan policies for the borough and will press for the inclusion of guidance requiring the design of lifetime accommodation that meets the changing needs of occupants over time and the inclusion of dementia/ disability friendly features in the design and layout of new buildings, especially larger scale developments and those built with a specific end user in mind, such as older people or people with learning difficulties.

There will be a robust consultation exercise on the proposed part two policies and once they have been finalised, they must then be submitted to the government planning inspector for approval, prior to being adopted by the Council. The approval process is very rigorous and all policies must be substantiated by robust evidence to gain approval from the planning inspector.

Should it be considered inappropriate for the local plan to impose the proposed requirements on all newbuild homes, we will seek to develop a voluntary code of practice to provide homes that meet these criteria on new developments, particularly for new affordable housing and homes aimed at older and vulnerable residents and we will ask registered providers and other relevant partners to sign up to it.

In addition, the strategic housing team is developing a series of locality-based delivery plans aimed at bringing forward sites that have extant planning permission for housing, but remain undeveloped. Many of these sites will deliver an element of affordable housing and the delivery plan also seeks to identify any interventions or available incentives that can be used to help stimulate delivery.

Should relevant funding become available, there is the potential to work with partners to bring forward sites identified through this delivery plan that could be used to deliver homes built to the higher Category 2 standard of current Building Regulations (lifetime homes standard). This would be facilitated through the proposed development sub-group, which will bring together expertise from strategic commissioning, strategic housing, planning, adult social care, public health and local health providers to inform planning and delivery.

Priority three: supporting health and independence – the right range of accommodation and services is available to support older and vulnerable people to live healthier lives and maintain their independence and wellbeing.

- **Supporting people to stay in their own home:** disabled facilities grants (DFG), decent homes loans (DHL) and home safety grants (HSG) are available to help people to fund adaptations to their home and to help maintain it in a safe state of repair:
 - DFGs are mandatory grants towards the costs of funding aids and adaptations to the home, part-funded by central government, which can considerably improve a disabled person's quality of life and help them to maintain their independence and personal dignity
 - HSGs are intended to help with the costs of removing serious hazards within the home that could adversely affect the health and safety of occupants, including hazards associated with substantial disrepair
 - DHGs facilitate equity release to help home owners pay for essential repairs and improvements, bringing homes up to the decent homes standard.

There are a number of national case studies showing that DFGs not only deliver improved outcomes for older and disabled people but, by reducing the incidence of slips, trips and falls and helping to prevent deterioration of existing health conditions, can save a considerable amount of money to the local NHS. Since 2009, 1,186 DFGs have been completed in the borough, including 142 grants relating to children. This equates to investment of £12.2 million, which it is estimated could save the NHS in the region of £5.5 million over a 10 year period.

Older people with mobility issues and those with physical and learning disabilities are most likely to receive the greatest benefit from these schemes. Equipment provided ranges from simple aids to day-to-day living like ramps, grab rails and hand rails, to the installation of a walk-in shower or stairlift. In exceptional circumstances major work may be funded or part-funded, such as the provision of an extension to provide a ground floor toilet/ bathroom or bedroom.

In West Cheshire, these schemes are administered through the Council's home improvement agency, which also offers a 'handyperson' service providing help with a range of small jobs to older and disabled households, such as changing a tap washer, putting up curtain poles, fixing handrails and basic gardening.

National research by Age UK⁵ found that many older people were not aware that this sort of assistance was available, however, underlining the need for awareness raising among relevant sectors of the community.

Adaptations can be very costly to provide, however. There must be recognition that supporting people to move into more appropriate accommodation, where this is the best long-term solution for the individual concerned, should be encouraged.

Whilst it is important that the choice remains with the individual, the majority of people are likely to want to stay in their own homes for as long as possible and, without sufficient and appropriate support, vulnerable and older people can become trapped in unsuitable accommodation, which is no longer financially or physically manageable and within the confines of which it is not possible to provide sufficient care to enable them to continue to enjoy a good quality of life.

Ensuring a range of attractive, suitable and sustainable alternative accommodation options is available, as well as offering help and assistance with adaptations and repairs to help those who want to stay in their own homes, will allow older people to make an informed decision about their future accommodation choices.

The majority of people in the borough own their own home and even older owner occupiers who do not need personal care and support, can find themselves in a position where they find it difficult to maintain their home in a good state of repair as they age. The Council already offers an equity release scheme to help owner occupiers living in poor housing conditions to access funds for repairs, but we will be looking at how we can enhance this programme going forward. We are also considering the potential to offer a homefinder service and a scheme to offer help with organising a move to those people that would like to move to more suitable accommodation but would need assistance to do so.

The latest private sector stock condition survey for the borough (2013) shows that non-decency rates are higher among older owner occupiers and particularly so in rural wards. Older people living in non-decent housing are more at risk of fuel poverty and ill health arising from or aggravated by cold and damp conditions. The majority of excess winter deaths occur among older people, especially older women, and those with underlying health problems.

While many associate deaths during periods of cold weather with hypothermia, most are in fact due to existing conditions like cardiac disease, strokes and respiratory problems, which are exacerbated by cold and damp conditions.

⁵ Improving later life, Age UK, 2014

Older and disabled people are therefore likely to receive the greatest benefit from initiatives to provide affordable warmth for the borough's residents, helping to ensure their home is affordable to heat.

The borough's affordable warmth strategy has recently been refreshed and sets out the objectives and initiatives underway to achieve this, including reducing the number of temperature related illnesses and excess winter deaths through:

- Improving the energy efficiency of the borough's homes,
- Encouraging behaviour change to reduce energy use and
- Supporting the use of community energy initiatives and renewable technologies to provide domestic energy.

Affordable warmth activities will be targeted at households that are fuel poor or at risk of fuel poverty⁶ and hard to treat homes, such as park homes and properties made with solid walls or non-traditional construction methods.

Older people living in isolated rural communities are particularly at risk of fuel poverty, as they are less likely to be connected to mains energy supplies and the affordable warmth steering group has already had some success in setting up a domestic oil bulk purchasing club for rural areas to help keep costs down.

Older people living in rural communities are also at risk of increasing isolation and diminishing access to services, including healthcare services, which could adversely impact on their future health and wellbeing. Nationally, research shows that younger people are leaving rural towns and villages because of a lack of affordable housing and employment opportunities⁷, which means services and businesses like GP surgeries, shops and post offices are unsustainable. Public transport may also be reduced, increasing the potential for isolation and driving up the difficulty and cost of providing care in the home.

In addition, population estimates and forecasts show that the borough's rural population is ageing faster than that in our urban localities, so it is likely that the situation for older people living in rural areas could deteriorate more rapidly in the coming years. This makes it even more critical that we get the housing offer in these rural areas right, to ensure they remain sustainable for current and future generations.

⁶ The Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act states that, "a person is to be regarded as living "in fuel poverty" if he is a member of a household living on a lower income in a home which cannot be kept warm at reasonable cost

⁷ Affordable housing: a fair deal for rural communities; Rural Housing Policy Review, 2015

Affordable rural housing is recognised as a key support to maintaining healthy rural communities. The Council's rural housing strategy has recently been reviewed and the action plan refreshed. Housing delivery plans are being developed for all of the Council's localities as part of the borough's overarching strategic housing framework and the rural housing action plan will be taken forward through the new rural housing delivery group.

The Localism Act 2011 gave communities the right to prepare a neighbourhood plan, to give them the means to create a shared vision for the area in which they live and the power to shape the development and growth of their community in future years. Through neighbourhood plans, communities are able to choose where new homes should be built, what type and size of homes these should be and even what infrastructure should be provided to support the integration of these new homes into the existing neighbourhood.

Neighbourhood planning provides a powerful set of tools for local people to ensure that they get the right type of development for their community, that it is aligned with the strategic needs and priorities of the wider locality and is a good fit with other local authority aims, such as promoting healthy lifestyles and supporting local businesses to thrive.

It is especially useful in rural areas, as residents can set out their plans for achieving a thriving local community, helping to ensure the long term sustainability of our rural localities. It also sets the scene for new development, ensuring that communities are clear about what they want to see being delivered in their neighbourhood and are able to articulate that to developers and engage with them to ensure that any new development fits in with local people's needs and aspirations.

- **Supported housing and extra care accommodation:** Supported housing is a generic term for housing which is augmented by some kind of care or support service, or which is specifically designed to help vulnerable individuals to manage their day-to-day needs and maintain their independence. The term is usually used to denote lower intensity kinds of provision within the community; it does not include nursing homes or residential care homes, which are the most intensive kind of accommodation provision for vulnerable people, but does include traditional sheltered housing and extra care schemes, as well as tenancies supported by floating support services.

The vast majority of people with disabilities, long-term health conditions or other issues that impact on their day-to-day lives have low level needs and are able to successfully live independently within the community, either on their own, with help from a family member or carer, or with an appropriate package of care and support.

Conversely, for people with higher level and acute care needs, who are unable to be housed safely within the community, nursing care or residential accommodation may continue to be the only suitable solution, but the Council aspires to reducing reliance on residential accommodation of this type, in favour of promoting independence and choice.

Access to supported housing can play a key role in the treatment of those abusing drugs and/ or alcohol in particular, by providing a stable home environment with support that helps to break the cycle of addiction that leads to sustained negative outcomes. It can also play a key role in supporting families and individuals experiencing domestic abuse, providing a safe and stable environment that supports recovery.

A supply of suitable and sustainable move on accommodation for service users moving on from supported accommodation is also essential, so that they are able to access permanent accommodation and can be supported to achieve independence, when they are ready to do so.

Stable accommodation is particularly beneficial for mental health clients and those with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders, so there is an additional benefit for these groups in finding long-term accommodation solutions, where support services can be provided on-site. This can be achieved in the community with an appropriate package of care and floating support, but can be more easily achieved and more cost effective to deliver in extra care accommodation.

Extra care accommodation provides a self-contained home with 24-hour on-site care and support available and a range of facilities designed to help occupants to maintain their independence for as long as possible; the level of care provision is flexible and can be varied to meet the changing needs of individuals as required.

Extra care developments generally also comprise a range of communal facilities and amenities, which offer residents the opportunity to engage in a host of social activities, combating social isolation and promoting health and wellbeing. These can include a library, residents lounge, gym, assisted bathing, restaurant, hairdresser, IT suite and on-site health facilities. Many have a guest suite so that residents are able to invite visitors to stay and many of the amenities provided are open to surrounding residents and can be used as a community hub for local people, encouraging wider community engagement and integration.

Extra care schemes cater to residents with varying levels of need, allowing care to be tailored to the individual's circumstances, but are at their most effective in providing those with moderate-to-high care needs with an independent lifestyle they may not otherwise be able to sustain.

The Council has recently completed an extra care development programme, which has delivered over 400 units of new extra care accommodation for older people living in the borough. The Council is keen to learn any lessons from this development programme that can be applied to the development of more schemes like this in the future and, in light of ongoing public sector spending cuts, to work with partners to find innovative new ways of funding additional schemes going forward.

Although the majority of the new extra care schemes delivered in the borough to date are aimed at people aged 55 and over, the Council acknowledges the need to promote greater independence for those with moderate-to-high level care and support needs regardless of age. Extra care accommodation can provide younger people with physical, sensory and learning disabilities, autism spectrum disorders and mental health issues and with an environment that supports improved health outcomes, encourages social interaction and promotes independence and wellbeing.

Extra care facilities for those aged under 55 are therefore considered to be a priority for the borough going forward and, in light of the borough's ageing population, specialist extra care schemes offering care and support for dementia sufferers are also a priority. The Council is investigating the viability of a build and lease arrangement, funded through a social investment scheme, to provide extra care accommodation in the borough in the future.

Telecare and other assistive technologies can also offer a cost-effective solution for older and vulnerable people and can serve as a key means of managing needs independently within the home without resorting to more intensive models of care provision. Telecare services can range from pendant alarms, fall detection equipment, smoke detectors, gas shut-off valves, pressure sensors, and door sensors, which alert a central monitoring point when activated. The monitoring centre will then try to contact the service user and/ or identified carer, or will summon emergency help if necessary.

Telecare equipment and other assistive technology are both key components in helping individuals to manage increasingly complex care needs in their own home and can help people to feel safer, reduce reliance on more intensive home care packages and delay or avoid the need to move to an institutional care setting.

Shared housing with support or 'keyring' type schemes may also be appropriate for some individuals with lower level needs. Aimed at younger individuals who are able to live independently but may lack the experience and confidence to do so, the 'keyring' model utilises community volunteers to provide peer support to individuals living in their own homes in the immediate vicinity, helping them to develop the lifeskills needed to reach and maintain independence and signposting to any appropriate services or agencies as and when the need arises.

Independence, wellbeing and choice has been at the heart of the government's aspirations for vulnerable and older people for many years. The sooner individuals are able to achieve independence, the better it is for their self esteem, wellbeing and quality of life; providing vulnerable people with the right support, environment and skills to live independently as early in life as possible promotes autonomy and self-reliance, which can prevent the deterioration of health and escalating care requirements later in life, but more importantly, enables the individual to have more control in their day-to-day life and a more fulfilling lifestyle.

With this in mind, a transitional approach for young people is clearly of vital importance, particularly for those leaving children's services, care leavers transitioning to adulthood and adults previously being cared for in the family home; it is especially of concern for ageing carers of adult children with care and support needs, who may need to be moved to alternative accommodation when their parents are no longer able to care for them.

It is therefore very important that individuals from these client groups and their families and carers are encouraged to plan ahead, so that they can become used to the prospect of living as independently as possible and are assisted to experience alternative ways of living and develop the relevant skills needed before a crisis is reached.

- **Information and advice**

The provision of information and advice about the types of accommodation, help and support available and signposting to other support providers and voluntary agencies in the borough is vital to helping people to access the right services and support and to ensure that they are able to make an informed decision about their future housing choices and achieve independence.

Information and advice services are integral to the health outcomes of older and vulnerable people and a vital component of the package of support which complements the accommodation offer available within the borough. These services provide an effective early intervention and prevention mechanism, helping people to access lower levels of support early on in their care journey that can prevent their condition from worsening and help them to achieve and maintain independence.

Raising awareness of the help and support available to help older and vulnerable people to live healthier lives and maintain their independence for longer is therefore critical to help people to plan ahead proactively and make an informed choice about how their current and future accommodation and care needs can be met.

The new West Cheshire Homes team provides a single point of contact for all housing-related advice and information. The team can give advice to people on how to make living in their own homes more sustainable, renting a home in the social housing or private rented sector, issues relating to homelessness and can provide appropriate referrals on to relevant support and care services, including social care if appropriate.

In addition, the Council is in the process of developing a new standalone website, called the 'local offer', which will provide a directory of services offered by the Council and will signpost to help and assistance provided by other organisations, including the voluntary sector. Although still under development, there is already a comprehensive amount of information available to people looking for help and the site has been designed to be simple to use and to make it as easy as possible to find relevant information.

In addition to the local offer website, the Council works with representative groups and the voluntary sector to raise awareness of services and the different types of accommodation available, including the corporate disabled access forum, the learning disabilities partnership board, Age UK Cheshire, Cheshire West citizens advice and DIAL West Cheshire.

Many households in need of help may not currently be known to the Council or other service providers, however and the danger is that they will only approach a service for help when a crisis occurs. This may be particularly true of ageing carers of adult children with special needs, residents with existing health issues or disabilities now reaching old age and people with low level mental health issues or learning disabilities that are experiencing a deterioration in their health or are affected by the ongoing welfare reforms, but have previously been self-sufficient.

It is equally important to consider the needs of those who may be caring for an elderly relative or friend and to ensure that they are aware of and able to access any relevant support and assistance, either for themselves or for the cared for person. Early presentation helps people to be able to plan ahead for the future more effectively, avoiding any potential crisis occurring.

Helping people to plan ahead before a crisis occurs not only avoids unnecessary distress and emotional upset, but enables a more personalised, proactive response to the needs of older and vulnerable people to be developed and can generate cost savings by avoiding the need for intensive support and specialised services, which are more likely to be needed once a crisis is reached.

The members of the housing and health group will act as champions for older and vulnerable people, raising awareness of the services and advice available and testing and challenging the accessibility of information and advice to ensure it is easily available to everyone.

To widen awareness further, it is proposed to link in with the home library service run in partnership by the Council and the royal voluntary service, which delivers and collects books for local people who are unable to get to the library by themselves due to mobility issues and to link in with other frontline staff and agencies that visit service users in their own homes.

Priority four: further developing the evidence base – robust evidence is available to inform future policy and delivery plans.

A robust and comprehensive evidence base is key to planning to meet the accommodation and related needs of vulnerable and older people living in the borough. Whilst the review that informed this accommodation plan has been of immense value in providing key information, it also highlighted a lack of data for certain service user groups and a lack of refined data.

For example, there is limited data available at lower geographic levels, including at locality level. Although data is available for each of the NHS clinical commissioning groups covering Cheshire West and Chester, for example, it is largely based on population data and Census data, which is now quite dated. Census data on disability levels is particularly problematic, as it is self-reported and does not give any details as to the type of disability that people may have.

It is also important to note that many people with disabilities, life-limiting illnesses or other issues that impact on their day-to-day lives may not be captured by the data available to us. For example, it is anticipated that many more people with learning disabilities and autism spectrum disorders live in the community unknown to service providers, but are currently self-sufficient or being supported by their families and friends. This can cause problems in the future, if care needs escalate, especially when parents are no longer able to provide care to adult children with support needs due to old age or their own ill health.

It is therefore vital to target households providing care that are currently self-sufficient and encourage them to make themselves known to the Council at an early stage, so that they can be supported to develop future care and support plans for their loved ones.

This will help us to plan ahead in terms of anticipating the demand for care and supported accommodation for the future, but more importantly will enable the looked after individual to undergo a planned transition and achieve the best possible outcome, taking their needs and aspirations into account.

The Council's learning disabilities partnership board has recently agreed to set up a working group to look into this issue, based on the theme of 'who will care after I'm gone?' and the lessons that are learned from this project will inform future reviews of this accommodation plan (12 months following the date of adoption).

In addition, the partnership board has offered to help the Council to design an easy read survey to assess the accommodation needs of people with learning disabilities in the borough to inform future planning and delivery for this client group.

A comprehensive evidence base is vital to establish a robust baseline from which to monitor progress, as well as to inform future policy and delivery plans and we will work with colleagues and partners through the housing and health group to develop information sharing protocols going forward, to ensure that relevant information can be collected.

The Care Act has established the right for anyone who needs care or support to carry out day-to-day tasks to request an assessment, leading to a comprehensive care plan for those found to be eligible. This includes any assistance, aids and adaptations needed to be able to continue to live independently and it is anticipated that anonymised data from these assessments will be a valuable source of information on needs going forward.

Local authorities and health authorities have a duty to produce a joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA), the purpose of which is to assess current and future health needs, providing a comprehensive health evidence base to inform strategic decision making and commissioning.

The JSNA is made up of a range of statistics and reports which are refreshed on a regular basis. Research is currently underway for a new mental health report for the borough, for example and any new information arising from this research will inform the first review of this accommodation plan.

The JSNA provides a key part of the evidence base for this accommodation plan and it is vital that the housing and health group is able to work with colleagues that produce the JSNA to ensure that the information gathered is relevant and timely, so that it supports delivery of an appropriate range of accommodation that meets the needs of our diverse communities.

6. Where have these priorities come from?

6.1 The evidence base

- **Vulnerable and older people's accommodation review**

The first step in developing a vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan for the borough was to undertake a review of current supply and demand for relevant accommodation to identify any gaps, both in terms of provision and in terms of available intelligence, likely future accommodation needs and key areas for action and further research. This review provided the evidence base that informed the development of this accommodation plan.

Information from a range of different sources was used to develop the review, including customer and accommodation profiles from colleagues across the Council and our partners, our joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA) and national data services and toolkits which give broad estimates of need for different client groups based on existing population data and forecasts for population growth. More information on the data sources used can be found in the review document.

Whilst it is acknowledged that vulnerable people do not exist as a homogenous group and that many vulnerable individuals have complex or multiple needs and may receive services from a number of different providers, including those supplied by the Council, service user records are generally classified in terms of the primary need identified. For ease of reference, therefore, the review focussed on the key client groups listed in section two of this accommodation plan.

- **Summary of findings from the review**

In brief, the findings from the review were as follows (more information can be found in the review document, including key issues and outcomes for individual client groups):

- A broad range and type of accommodation is required to meet the diversity of need identified in the borough's population
- There is a lack of awareness of the services and support available, particularly among those not already known to service providers
- The borough's ageing population profile is likely to result in:
 - Increasing numbers of frail elderly people and older people who may need care and support and access to extra care or adapted accommodation in the future

- Increasing numbers of older people with existing conditions and health issues e.g. increasing proportion of older people with learning disabilities
 - An increasing number of ageing carers looking after adult children with care needs in the family home
- Balancing the needs of individuals with multiple issues is a challenge, for example someone with learning disabilities and substance abuse issues
- There is a lack of move on accommodation for those transitioning to independence and care leavers transitioning to adulthood
- Improving health outcomes for Gypsies and Travellers and homeless people are key priorities
- Wider economic context: diminishing resources/ increasing public sector cuts, welfare reforms and subdued employment and housing markets.
- **Feedback from consultation on the review**

The review was published on the Council's website for a period of three calendar months from 1 September to 30 November 2015 and stakeholders including service users, carers, providers, third sector organisations and relevant representative groups were invited to view and comment on it. This gave partners and stakeholders the opportunity to tell us whether they were satisfied that the review represented an accurate picture of the supply of and demand for accommodation and related services for vulnerable and older people living in the borough and to highlight any omissions or revisions necessary.

We also published draft key outcomes and priorities based on the information in the review and a comprehensive equality analysis, to give stakeholders the opportunity to comment on these at the same time.

Although people were encouraged to complete an online questionnaire to give us their views, given the nature of the client groups that were likely to want to comment, respondents were also able to give us their feedback in a number of different ways including writing, emailing or telephoning and speaking to Council officers directly, as preferred. Council officers also attended meetings of relevant representative groups, such as the learning disabilities partnership board, to discuss the review findings and members of the housing and health group raised awareness of the review and developing accommodation plan at other meetings that they attend, such as the stakeholder network and the corporate disabled access forum.

The vast majority of people who responded to the consultation agreed that the review represented an accurate picture of the supply of and demand for accommodation and related services for vulnerable and older people living in the borough. Where people disagreed, reasons given included (in no particular order):

- Use of bed and breakfast type accommodation for homeless people should be avoided unless it is an emergency (reducing the use of bed and breakfast accommodation is identified as a priority in the Council's homelessness strategy and a number of actions are already underway to curb its use)
- There needs to be an awareness that the money that can be spent on adaptations is reducing and that residents are encouraged and supported to move to the most appropriate accommodation that is already adapted before they reach the point of crisis (i.e. a more prevention-focused approach)
- The need for a more joined-up approach between housing/ accommodation and health and social care services to remove barriers to accessing suitable accommodation for service users (work is already underway to improve the links between housing, health and social care through the Care Act implementation project)
- The growth of the elderly learning disability population will present particular difficulties and is captured but there is no recognition of current issues facing individuals with a mild to moderate learning disability below age 65 e.g. the ability to maintain tenancies in the face of welfare reform changes; these individuals are likely only to come to attention at a point of crisis e.g. eviction.

The feedback from those respondents that did not complete a questionnaire, but gave comments via email or telephone were more general in nature and included the following:

- Need to reference the role of assistive technology in promoting independence
- The importance of effective partnership working and getting buy-in from key partners
- The importance of maintaining independence for adults and supporting the move to independence for those approaching adulthood
- Emphasis on building homes for life and providing fit for purpose flexible living options

- The need for extra care type accommodation for those aged under 55
- The need for more move on accommodation
- The need to improve/ increase the range and availability of accommodation for older and vulnerable individuals in general.

All the feedback we received has been taken into account in developing this accommodation plan, which was itself subject to full consultation before being tabled for adoption.

- **Feedback from consultation on the draft vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan**

The draft accommodation plan was published on the Council's website for a period of twelve weeks from 25 April 2016 to 17 July 2016 and, as with the review document, stakeholders including service users, carers, providers, third sector organisations and relevant representative groups were invited to view and comment on it.

Again, respondents were able to give feedback in a number of different ways including writing, emailing or telephoning and speaking to Council officers directly and Council officers attended meetings of relevant representative groups, to discuss the feedback received on the review and how this had informed the draft accommodation plan.

The vast majority of people who responded to the consultation strongly agreed or agreed with the proposed vision and priorities. Comments received included the following:

- It is not only about the supply of new homes, but it is also important to help older people to maintain their health and independence while still living in their current home
- Extra care schemes should be open to all, regardless of age
- Attractive downsizing options are needed that encourage older people to want to move and that are local, so that they are still able to access support networks and keep in touch with friends and family
- Suggestion to use a local housing panel mechanism to review the housing needs of those excluded from social housing or finding it difficult to access housing in the borough

- The links between housing and employment and how this can help contribute to the general well being of an individual should be referenced
- Planning for dementia care is vital.

Given the nature of the accommodation plan, it was important to ensure that responses were received from a range of people from the groups involved, or from their representatives:

- Around one fifth of respondents said they had a long term health issue, illness or disability and of those, half had a physical disability, whilst most of the remainder stated that they had a visual impairment or long standing health condition
- Over half of those who responded had a caring responsibility, mainly caring for an older person, followed by caring for a disabled adult or for young children
- Replies were received from a broad range of locations across the borough (identified by postcode district) and age groups, with respondents from each decade between 25-35 and 75-85.

The feedback we received has been taken into account in developing this accommodation plan.

- **Joint strategic needs assessment (JSNA)**

Local authorities and health authorities have a duty to produce a JSNA, the purpose of which is to assess current and future health needs, providing a comprehensive health evidence base to inform strategic decision making and commissioning. The JSNA is made up of a range of statistics and reports, each dealing with a specific topic and which are refreshed on a regular basis.

In Cheshire West and Chester, JSNA data are grouped around the themes starting well, living well, working well and ageing well, to help understand the drivers affecting each of these themes and to provide a baseline from which to monitor the progress of any interventions.

Relevant JSNA reports that have informed this accommodation plan include those relating to learning disabilities, older people's health, dementia, drug and alcohol misuse, existing population data and population forecasts for the borough.

Mental health is an acknowledged area of weakness in the current JSNA and the health and wellbeing board approved plans to develop the evidence base for this theme in 2015, as part of a wider review and refresh

of the JSNA. Further research into this subject is currently underway and any relevant findings will be considered during the first review of this accommodation plan (12 months after adoption).

6.2 Policy context

- **Council plan**

The council plan sets out the Council's key priorities and informs decision making and commissioning at all levels of the Council. It outlines the vision and priorities for the whole organisation, describes what actions the Council needs to take to achieve its aims and informs the allocation of resources to deliver these actions.

The council plan acknowledges that housing is a significant driver of health and quality of life. It is one of ten key outcomes identified in the council plan to help the borough and our residents to thrive:

Good quality and affordable housing that meets the needs of our diverse communities.

This accommodation plan directly contributes to this outcome and supports several other outcomes identified in the Council Plan, namely:

- Older people and vulnerable adults are compassionately supported to lead fulfilled and independent lives
- Vulnerable adults feel safe and are protected and all of our families, children and
- Young people are supported to get the best start in life.

- **Health and wellbeing strategy**

Housing's significant impact on health is recognised in the Council's health and wellbeing strategy, which states that health issues should not be viewed in isolation, but should be tackled within the context of the wider health and wellbeing framework. This includes factors such as housing, education, employment and leisure.

The health and wellbeing strategy's vision is:

To improve the health and wellbeing of our local population and reduce health inequalities, enabling residents to live more fulfilling, independent and healthy lives.

This accommodation plan for vulnerable and older people living in the borough has a strong relationship with the health and wellbeing strategy, directly contributing to the delivery of the following high level outcomes:

- Older residents are living healthier and more independent lives, feel supported and have a good quality of life
- Improved mental health, wellbeing and personal resilience for our residents.

The Council recognises the significant interrelationship between health and housing and the co-location of Public Health within the local authority framework helps to support greater integration between health and other services, including the strategic housing function. This includes helping to inform priorities for housing policy and future housing development in the borough and providing a public health perspective to the development of this accommodation plan.

- **Housing strategy**

There are many existing strategies already in place that seek to improve the lives of the borough's vulnerable residents. This includes the borough's overarching housing strategy, which identified housing's role in supporting older and vulnerable residents to maintain their independence as a key priority.

The links between the relevant priorities in the above plans and the vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan are illustrated over the page.

- **Local plan**

The borough's local plan accords with the national planning policy framework and provides the overarching strategic spatial framework for all new development in the borough, including new housing development.

Part one of the borough's local plan was adopted in January 2015 and sets out the broad planning policy framework for Cheshire West and Chester. Policy SOC3 of part one of the local plan sets out the overarching guidance relating to the housing mix and type of new homes to be provided and paves the way for the inclusion of policies around lifetime homes and other design criteria relating to the suitability and accessibility of accommodation for older and vulnerable people:

Comparison of relevant priorities from the Council's corporate plan, health and wellbeing strategy, housing strategy and the vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan.



SOC3: housing mix and type

Proposals for new housing should take account of the needs of that particular area and especially of:

- The provision of small family homes to assist households into home ownership and for older people who may wish to downsize
- The provision of a range of accommodation types to meet the long term needs of older people; this could include the provision of Lifetime Homes, bungalows and extra care housing

The policies comprised in part two of the local plan will provide more detailed guidance on new housing development and these policies are currently being drafted.

- **Housing and health group**

This is a sub-group of the Council's health and wellbeing board and has been instrumental in developing this accommodation plan and the review that informed it. The group has members from strategic commissioning, social care, public health, the local NHS, local registered providers, children's services and the leaving care team, as well as strategic housing and its terms of reference are to:

- Facilitate greater integration and promote better communication between the housing, health and social care functions and ensure that housing's role in supporting improved health outcomes and maintaining independence is recognised and optimised
- Ensure that there is an appropriate range and choice of accommodation in the borough to enable older and vulnerable residents to access and maintain suitable accommodation that supports them to live as independently and healthily as possible
- Ensure relevant policy and commissioning decisions are informed by a robust evidence base
- Encourage a collaborative approach to tackling relevant issues and promote shared solutions
- Lead on co-ordinating bids for any relevant funding opportunities
- Provide a platform where common issues can be debated and conflicting priorities resolved

- Provide a forum for sharing good practise and innovation and act as a driver of improvement in housing, health and social care and matters and
 - Assess and challenge the impact of changes in national policy and legislation affecting the housing and health agenda and assess any potential impact on local residents
- **Links with other priorities and strategies**

Other strategies and policies that have informed this accommodation plan include the:

- Children in care and care leavers strategy
- Homelessness strategy
- Domestic abuse strategy
- Gypsy and Traveller accommodation assessment
- Adult social care market position statement
- Strategic commissioning plan for adult social care and health.

This accommodation plan does not seek to duplicate any of the priorities and actions already being taken forward through these strategies, but it aims to support and complement work already underway, ensure that the needs of those groups that are not covered elsewhere are not overlooked and to support a co-ordinated approach to tackling the issues identified.

7. How will we achieve our aim to improve housing outcomes for vulnerable and older people living in the borough?

The following action plan has been developed, covering the next twelve months, to begin to tackle the issues identified in the vulnerable and older people's accommodation plan. The housing and health group will take the lead in delivering this action plan and in monitoring performance. The action plan will be reviewed and refreshed by December 2017, following the first review of this accommodation plan.

8. Vulnerable and older people's accommodation action plan 2016 – 2017

Ref	Action	Lead	Timescale
Priority one: increasing the supply of suitable accommodation			
1.1	<p>Introduce development sub-group of housing and health group to establish strategic lead and co-ordinate delivery of accommodation for older and vulnerable people in the borough, based on evidence of need; including representatives from health, social care, commissioning and strategic housing.</p> <p>Development sub-group workplan to include securing the delivery of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least one extra care scheme for under 55s • One scheme piloting foyer-style accommodation • At least one fully wheelchair accessible unit and • Establish bank of good practice and innovation in developing accommodation for vulnerable and older people; identify new models that could be piloted in the borough. 	Rachel Rens/ Alison Johnston	<p>Development sub-group in place by January 2017</p> <p>Delivery of schemes secured by April 2020</p>
1.2	Ensure that the local authority has robust policies in place to make best use of the borough's existing housing stock to meet the needs of vulnerable and older residents and maximise their housing choices.	Joanne Walters	Tenancy Strategy April 2017; other strategies in line with their review timetables
1.3	Investigate the viability of a housing allocations panel with representation from the local authority and RP partners to help increase access to social housing for vulnerable individuals.	Terry Upton	November 2016

Priority two: planning policy and design			
2.1	10% of homes developed under current local authority newbuild programme (using HRA funding on local authority owned land) to be built to Category 2 standard of Building Regulations (equivalent to lifetime homes standard); at least three of these to be built to wheelchair accessible standard.	Alison Amesbury	Completion scheduled for 2018
2.2	Housing and health group to develop voluntary development code of practice to deliver homes built to Category 2 standard of Building Regulations (lifetime homes standard) and encourage registered providers and other relevant partners to sign up to it. Going forward, all newbuild local authority homes to be built to Category 2 standard of Building Regulations (equivalent to lifetime homes standard).	Graham Garnett	Code of practice developed by March 2017
2.3	Housing and health group to support development of relevant policies for local plan part 2, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusive design principles • Healthy design principles • Future proofing new homes to meet the needs of occupants as they age • Policy encouraging developers to provide more new private sector homes that meet the Category 2 standard of Building Regulations (lifetime homes standard). 	Graham Garnett/ Emma Jones	In line with local plan part 2 timetable
2.4	Ensure information on new developments is shared with colleagues in the local health sector at planning stage, to help with forward planning to meet anticipated demand for healthcare.	Helen Weaver	From September 2016

Priority three: supporting health and independence			
3.1	Test and challenge accessibility of information about the range of accommodation, support, advice and assistance available in the borough to ensure that vulnerable and older people are able to make informed decisions about their future housing options; work with local offer website moderator to ensure comprehensive information and advice about the range of accommodation and related services available for older and vulnerable people living in the borough is provided.	Joanne Jewell	Ongoing
3.2	Support the corporate aim to be a dementia friendly borough; develop a knowledge base of dementia friendly housing and ensure housing is represented when dementia friendly initiatives are being planned.	Donald Read	Ongoing
3.3	Investigate potential to deliver homefinder/ home move service for households and individuals that would like to move to more suitable accommodation but would need assistance to do so.	Colin Hargreaves	March 2017
3.4	Investigate ways of enhancing the existing equity release scheme to enable more home owners living in poor conditions to access funds for repairs.	Colin Hargreaves	March 2017

Priority four: further developing the evidence base			
4.1	Ensure information available from JSNA and performance monitoring is used to inform future delivery planning for accommodation and related services for vulnerable and older people.	Donald Read	In line with JSNA workplan
4.2	Guide the JSNA workplan to ensure relevant information to inform future delivery planning is available, including number of service users from each cohort, locality, age, type of need and whether need is currently met; ensure collection and provision of relevant data to guide future planning is built into project specification on all new commissioned schemes.	Donald Read	In line with JSNA workplan
4.3	Conduct a review of the recently completed extra care accommodation development programme to inform potential future delivery plans.	Alison Johnston	March 2017
4.4	Work with the learning disabilities partnership board to undertake a survey to determine the accommodation needs of adults with learning disabilities living in the borough.	Helen Weaver	March 2017
4.5	Homeless health needs assessment to be repeated regularly and recommendations arising implemented.	Donald Read	Assessment to be undertaken at least once more over Plan lifetime
4.6	Work with the Cheshire Gypsy and Traveller partnership lead officer to understand the accommodation and health needs of this client group.	Donald Read	March 2017