



**All Party Parliamentary Group
Housing in the North**

Non-Verbatim Minutes

**Tuesday 15 May 2018
4.30pm – 6.00pm**

Committee Room 19, House of Commons, Westminster

Present

MPs and Peers: Ian Mearns MP (Chair), Derek Twigg MP, Liz Twist MP, Lord Best, Lord Shipley

Also Present: Tricia Grierson, Head of Independent Living, Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust; Jo Boaden, Chief Executive, Northern Housing Consortium (NHC); Paul Mullis, Chief Executive, Durham Aged Mineworkers' Homes Association; Geraldine Howley, Group Chief Executive, Incommunities Group; Paul Fiddaman, Group Chief Executive, Karbon Homes; Matthew Walker Chief Executive, Leeds Federated Housing Association; Matthew Gardiner, Chief Executive, Trafford Housing Trust; Neil Revely, Chair of Housing Policy Network and National Executive Member, Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS)

Secretariat: Tracy Harrison, Deputy Chief Executive, NHC; Kate Maughan, Head of Member Engagement, NHC; Liam Gregson, Member Engagement Officer, NHC

Apologies

MPs and Peers: Debbie Abrahams MP, Lord Deben, Peter Dowd MP, Baroness Young of Old Scone, Lord Beecham, Lord Richard Rogers, Baroness Armstrong of Hill Top, George Howarth MP, Baroness Maddock, Gill Furniss MP, Andrea Jenkyns MP, Baroness Valentine, Roberta Blackman-Woods MP, Julie Elliott MP, Faisal Rashid MP, Baroness Eaton

In the Chair: Ian Mearns MP

Chair's Welcome

Ian Mearns MP welcomed everyone to the APPG Housing in the North (the APPG) and gave a brief introduction on the groups history and purpose. The APPG has been running for around five years and was set up in response to the apparent southern centric approach to national housing policy.

The APPG brings parliamentarians together to discuss a range housing issues from a northern perspective. This meeting was dedicated to housing and older people and those present would hear from Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust (JJHT) on the work they do in supporting older tenants, as well as Lord Best who would provide an update on the most recent report published by the APPG Housing and Care for Older People.

Tricia Grierson, Head of Independent Living, Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust

Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust (JJHT) was established in 1969 by RAF pilot Johnnie Johnson. In aiming to offer homes that promote independent living, an expertise has developed in providing housing and services for older people. Beginning in Stockport, the organisation now has 5000 homes across the region. Whilst maintaining an emphasis on supporting older tenants, investment has been made across Johnnie Johnson's portfolio to offer a range of housing choices including family homes, bungalows, and flats.

Inspired by their founder, JJHT continues its commitment to supporting veterans of the armed forces and recently the organisations Chief Executive and Board Chair signed the Armed Forces Covenant on behalf of JJHT.

JJHT works in several ways to fulfil their 'living longer, living better' ethos. In striving towards this goal, the organisation prioritises establishing innovative partnerships that helps JJHT offer choice and value for money to residents. In particular, the importance of partnership working in addressing health and social care commitments has grown in recent years.

TG highlighted JJHT's Astraline service as a perfect example of innovation driving improvements in supporting tenants. Here, increasing digitalisation of services enabled staff to dedicate their time to providing personal support to those who need it most. Becoming operational in 2000, what was originally conceived as a telecare monitoring service has grown through developments in new technology into a range of services offered to both JJH residents and other housing associations in the UK. Astraline today covers alarm and sensor monitoring, welfare calls, personal alarms to support independence, and support for people living with long term conditions.

An exciting advancement in assistive care is the development of a GDSP Pendant. Ostensibly worn as a piece of jewellery, the pendant allows the user to share their whereabouts with others should they experience difficulty. Whilst similar products have been used to support people with dementia, JJHT are exploring wider uses to allow people to be more confidently independent. Discussions are taking place with design manufacturers to develop a pendant that looks more like day-to-day jewellery. TG noted that technological advancements was lessening the stigma around assistive technology. For example, voice controlled 'virtual assistants' such as Amazon Alexa and Google Assistant have become everyday items.

In supporting elder residents, the challenge experienced by JJHT was not in that there was an acute shortage of homes in the North, but existing homes weren't suitable for adapting. TG highlighted that across the North there was a high percentage of people who were living in homes unsuitable for their needs and in certain areas only a small number of properties were specialist homes.

An additional challenge was the increase in the number of younger men (aged 55-65) requiring access to sheltered accommodation. Tensions had been seen to develop between new residents and the traditionally older current residents. The increase in this take up from this younger demographic was underlined by a rise in accompanying mental health issues, including those connected to drugs and alcohol. Sheltered housing schemes were seeing a knock-on effect of anti-social behaviour incidents because of this.

As part of JJHT's commitment to armed forces veterans, JJHT Chief Executive Yvonne Castle attended the recent Greater Manchester Armed Forces Summit where Mayor Andy Burnham pledged to end veteran rough sleeping by 2020. As part of this, Greater Manchester Housing Trust, which JJHT is part of, signed the Armed Forces Covenant to assist veterans with housing, employment and skills. TG underlined the obstacles in offering mental health support to veterans who needed it. Mental health issues could not be predicted and in many cases it is hard to spot. In looking to meet this need, JJHT has worked previously with the Walking with the Wounded charity.

TG moved on to discuss the challenges seen in the care and support system. The room was made aware of the ADASS report 'A Better Offer for Older People - Making Extra Care housing work for your community' which argues that not enough older people in the UK have the option of Extra Care when needed. It was noted that there was a reliance on the largest supplier companies which feels unsustainable. An additional challenge was the care system's ageing workforce. A large percentage of care workers were reaching retirement age and there has been difficulties in attracting and retaining a younger workforce.

JJHT had a range of plans, both short term and long term, to help address the Extra Care shortage as well as alleviate wider pressure on the NHS. A notable example of this was the launch of the organisation's 'Neighbourhood Apartments'. As part of this scheme NHS patients were offered accommodation with a range of support from JJHT's Independent Living Coordinators. Use of the apartments can be up to six weeks or until the individual is well enough to return home or suitable accommodation can be found. It is hoped that the apartments will save the NHS £1million by 2021. TG noted that one night in an apartment cost around £30 whilst overnight in a hospital could be valued between £300-£400.

JJHT were also instrumental in setting up a HOOP service (Housing Options for Older People). TG felt that an issue exacerbating the housing crises was a lack of knowledge people have when it comes to the options available to them. The HOOP service aimed to tackle this by providing tenure blind advice to residents whilst also upskilling other public-sector workers such as social carers and GP's.

One way in which JJHT was expanding the options available to older people was in ensuring their new build homes were easily adaptable. Homes may not be designed specifically for the needs of ageing tenants but as family homes with the flexibility to be adapted as the needs of residents evolved. TG felt that this work was significant in allowing people to remain in their home and their community for as long as possible.

TG concluded by underlining the benefits that were being seen in technological innovations and their impact on better allocating resources to those who need it. Collaboration across the sector was also bearing fruit, with JJHT being a component in the National Housing Federation's 'Greenhouse Project' looking to accelerate the development of new products and services.

Questions and Answers

Jo Boaden, Chief Executive, Northern Housing Consortium (JB), asked TG to expand on JJHT's Neighbourhood Apartments scheme, what support is available to prevent people having to go back to hospital? TG noted that in many cases a tenant's care package may not have been considering, for example, safeguarding issues. In other cases, financial advice and support may

have been the most pressing concern. It was this combination of care but wider support as well that aided residents.

Geraldine Howley, Chief Executive, Incommunities Group (GH), noted that JJHT found themselves in a good situation being within the Great Manchester healthcare system where a strong collaboration culture was prevalent. GH was at a recent health and social care event and emphasised that strong working relationships between partners needed to be matched by long term thinking in strategy and funding.

Matthew Walker, Chief Executive, Leeds Federated Housing, asked how widespread these sophisticated technologies are, such as the GDSP Pendant. TG felt overall different products were at different stages of development. One noteworthy development was the use of sensors in building up a 'behaviour profile' of residents, allowing organisations to identify whether something wasn't right.

Liz Twist MP highlighted that the connection between health, housing, and social care was something explored by the MHCLG Select Committee. The committee's latest report on Housing and Older People recommended that the upcoming Social Care Green Paper should consider the potential for extra care housing to play a greater role in providing social care. Liz Twist MP also sympathised with TG's assertion of the difficulties of retaining young workers in social care, this was an issue highlighted again in the work of the Select Committee.

The Lord Best OBE, Chair of the APPG Housing and Care Older People

Lord Best thanked the APPG for inviting him to speak and to share the work of the APPG Housing and Care Older People, of which he acts as Chair.

The recent work of the APPG Housing and Care for Older People has centred around a series of inquiries and publications. These HAPPI (Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation) reports have looked at designing homes for older people (2009), scaling up the provision of homes for older people (2012), retirement properties (2015), and most recently, the findings of an inquiry into rural housing for an ageing population (April 2018).

Lord Best underlined the HAPPI report on Rural Housing for Older People's concern that a growing proportion of older people in rural communities were finding that their homes were no longer suitable. Additionally, it has been seen that the support given to older people wanting to maintain their independence had revolved around two approaches: small village developments, and larger retirement schemes in nearby towns and cities. Whilst Lord Best was keen to underline that both these approaches could work well, he felt that a priority should be to remove the barriers to helping people remain in their communities where they have a generational connection and social relationships.

A suggestion mentioned in the report was several new build bungalows situated either in or around the village where unused land could be found. These homes would be suitable for the resident's needs and help reduce the need for care at home. It was also believed that this would help resolve underoccupancy in homes, older people who would not have wanted to move out of the area would be able to move into the bungalow, which in turn would free up their larger home for a new family.

Other recommendations from the report to local and national government were the specific allocation of housing for older people as part of Local Plans, as well as Homes England explicitly targeting a portion of their funding to the older demographics.

Lord Best recalled previous successes where Local Authorities used social housing grants for specific types of homes, as opposed to 'generic' family homes. More opportunities for Local Authorities to borrow to build housing should be explored, as well as looking into Stamp Duty relief for individuals of pension age as an incentive to downsize. It was noted that most subsidies for home ownership are aimed at young people. At the same time, a sizeable proportion of older owner occupiers would benefit from downsizing but their needs aren't being acted on by private developers.

Also highlighted in the HAPPI report was the benefit of 'care and repair' home improvement services. In many cases these services made life changing adaptations for relatively small amounts of money. Looking at a Homes Improvement Agency in Leeds, a common problem was found in central heating. Small changes could prevent boilers breaking overtime or heating a home through an alternative source could save thousands in the long term. Lord Best felt that the growth of Home Improvement Agencies, which could happen through the improved funding of Disabled Facility Grants, would have a big impact on the health and wellbeing of older people.

Neil Revely, Chair of Housing Policy Network and National Executive Member, ADASS, was invited to discuss the upcoming Rural Housing for an Ageing Population Conference taking place in Harrogate 27 July 2018. The event would explore the findings and recommendations from the HAPPI report as mentioned by Lord Best whilst also looking at the policy context, challenges in delivery, and wider issues such as loneliness and isolation. NR was happy to say that the issues raised in the report had gained traction amongst various agencies and the event would have representation from the Local Government Association, ADASS, HousingLin, and the Northern Housing Consortium whose website was hosting further information on the conference and how to book.

NR commented that in discussions with newly appointed ADASS President Glenn Garrod, it was clear that ADASS understood that housing's role within adult social care was becoming increasingly important. Similarly, conversations with Government officials regarding the forthcoming social care Green Paper had indicated that housing would be considered in some form.

NR agreed with Lord Best's praise for 'care and repair' services and recalled work by Care and Repair England undertaken around the introduction of The Care Act 2014 which highlighted that, due to budget restrictions, Local Authorities were cutting repair to repair and housing advice services.

NR welcomed the refreshed 'Improving health and care through the home: Memorandum of Understanding', published in February 2018. It was an important document in understanding and promoting the role of the home in improving social care services. It was fair to say that the connection between housing and health was now being acknowledged in Government policy.

The group noted the current review of Disabled Facilities Grants by the Department of Health and Social Care. Attendees agreed that whilst extra funding had already been given, flexibility in how the funding was used would also be beneficial. In some cases it had been shown that even when

the maximum allocation had been given, it was the flexibility in tailoring it to an individual's needs that made the biggest impact.

Questions and Answers

Matthew Gardiner, Chief Executive, Trafford Housing Trust, recalled his involvement building an Extra Care scheme with partners in his locality. Whilst there was plenty of initial interest in building an 'ecosystem of integrated healthcare', the scale of restructures amongst the involved partners meant that personnel changed dramatically over time and the project lost key knowledge and momentum.

JB picked up on Lord Best's point that Help to Buy subsidies are primarily aimed at younger buyers whilst similar incentives are not offered to entice older people to downsize, how could we make this case, for example, around Stamp Duty relief for older people?

On a similar point, Liz Twist MP asked Lord Best to expand on the idea of incentives for older people to move home. It was the experience of the Housing, Communities, and Local Government Committee that the generational and social ties to a home were so strong amongst the older population that Stamp Duty relief wouldn't be effective.

In response to Liz Twist MP, Lord Best stated that the key would be to ensure there were available suitable properties in the same village. People do not want to move; but was that from their home or their immediate community sphere? Incentives to move but also the availability of a suitable property within the same community would surely help.

Picking up on JB's question, Lord Best felt that ultimately developers would have to 'see to believe'. More developments targeted at older buyers would have to be built and once proven popular, more developers would come on board. The challenge was a 'chicken or the egg situation'; developers will not build unless there is a market, but if these tailored homes aren't built then a market will never exist.

GH pointed out that in experience of Incommunities, older people did not like the upheaval of moving home or struggled to find the assistance to make their move less stressful. Incommunities had previously, with the help of external funding, ran a popular scheme where a 'moving team' would complete all tasks as part of the move from plugging in electrical items to fitting carpets. The ability to take such anxiety out of moving home helped individuals to do so and the scheme proved popular.

Paul Fiddaman, Group Chief Executive, Karbon Homes, was heartened by the work being undertaken at a parliamentary level to promote the need of older people being written into Local Plans. There is a clear need for a proportion of the population to move into a home suitable for their needs. However, one barrier was that bungalows tended to be land intensive and it was difficult for such a development to 'stack up'. Lord Best agreed and highlighted that more people were coming around to the idea that the price of land would have to decrease.

NR highlighted a recommendation to the Local Planning Act that Health and Wellbeing Boards could contribute to identifying housing need for elderly and vulnerable residents. In relation to the challenges of expanding bungalow developments, NR felt that there were solutions available whether through local exception sites or experimenting with space e.g. smaller gardens. It was

noted that Birmingham City Council was now one of the largest providers of housing in their area and a good amount had been bungalows.

Ian Mearns MP closed the meeting by thanking everyone for their contributions. It was important that the APPH HiN considers a diverse range of issues and this discussion on housing for older people had certainly given everyone food for thought.

Next meeting of the APPG Housing in the North:

**Tuesday 9 October 2018, 17.30 – 19.00, Committee Room 8, House of Commons,
Westminster**