Inclusive neighbourhoods

Promoting social inclusion in housing with care for older people

Summary

- With an ageing population, the demand for housing options that provide on-site care and support for older adults is growing and expected to continue to rise.

- However, not much is known about how these living environments support older residents from social minorities.

- This presentation summarises the *Inclusive Neighbourhoods* policy report, which finds that:
  - Housing with care schemes work well in counteracting social isolation and preventing loneliness
  - Pockets of isolation still exist among some residents, particularly people from social minorities

- The report also identifies the interpersonal, organisational, physical and environmental factors that help create inclusive housing environments for older people and makes recommendations for addressing discrimination and creating more inclusive, age-friendly housing options to support us as we get older.

- You can download the report in full using this link.

Where do the findings come from?

- The *Inclusive Neighbourhoods* report was based on findings from the <u>Diversity with Care Environments (DICE) project,</u> a three-year study, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) and hosted by the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol in collaboration with the International Longevity Centre-UK (ILC) and The Housing Learning and Improvement Network (Housing LIN).

- Through a survey of residents and interviews with residents, staff members and housing experts, the DICE project explored the social inclusion of older people from socially diverse backgrounds in housing with care schemes across England and Wales.

- You can find further information on the DICE project and its methods at the end of this presentation, or by <u>using this link</u>.

What did we find?
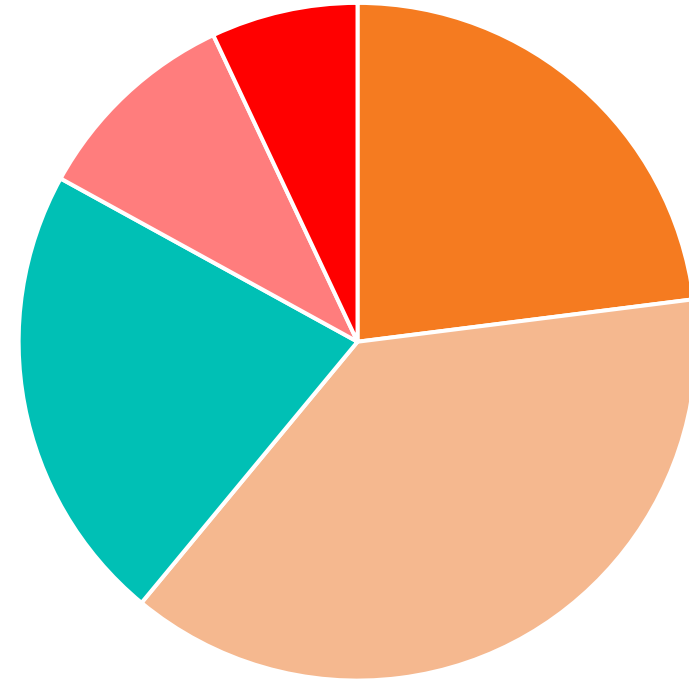
Housing with care can reduce loneliness

Housing with care residents are less lonely than they would be if they were living in the wider community.

Housing with care can facilitate social inclusion

Nearly two-thirds of residents agree that there are positive opportunities to socialise in their schemes.

My housing setting offers many positive opportunities to socialise with other residents

■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

But pockets of isolation still exist

While most residents from social minorities feel valued and included, many anticipate or have experienced discrimination.

" I got rather annoyed with a couple of people who actually were very homophobic... I was very disappointed with some of the people's attitudes. "

What did discrimination look like?

Many residents from social minorities:

- Felt disconnected from other residents based on personal interests and life-experiences.

- Looked outward for social connections.

- Actively chose not to participate in scheme life.

We also found evidence of 'boundary setting', where residents with majority social identities maintained boundaries between themselves and those from social minorities.

"I feel that I'm not complete here, because I seem to be like the only gay in the village, or that I know of. It's that sort of thing. It would just be nice if we could have more diversity in the scheme."

(Resident, male, 73 years, gay, retirement living scheme)

Discrimination based on disability

- One in eight respondents with a chronic illness or disability reported discrimination on the basis of physical disability.

- This included finding staff-resident communication, social activities and the physical design of schemes inaccessible.

- Exclusionary views were also expressed by residents towards their peers' physical and cognitive disabilities.

"Too many people with high support needs which cannot be accommodated in independent living schemes"

"Because the residents' laundry is upstairs… the doors are so narrow. If they're in a wheelchair, they can't get into the laundry. So, one or two of them [residents] here do their washing in their flat, and I'll take it up and dry it."
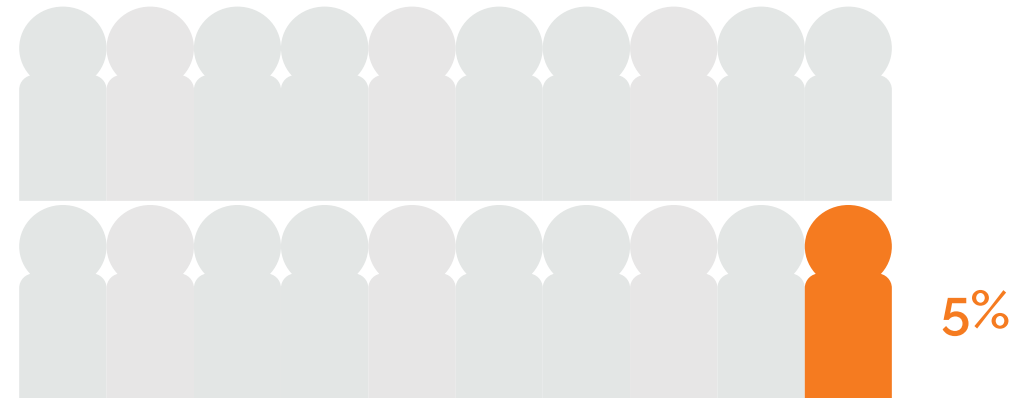
(Resident, female, 77 years, extra-care scheme)

Where does this discrimination come from?

1 in 8 residents have seen discrimination from other residents, which is more than twice as common as discrimination from staff.

Have you seen discrimination…

… from staff?

5%

… from residents?

13%

How can we support social inclusion in HCS schemes?

Promoting supportive relations with other residents

- Supportive neighbourhood relations are vital to facilitating social inclusion.

- Routine activities, such as checking in with neighbours, and assisting with tasks like bringing newspapers or helping with grocery shopping, helped tackle isolation during COVID-19 lockdowns.

- Sometimes, dominant sub-groups of residents ('cliques') made up of close friends can form and exclude other residents.

Ensuring staff presence and support on-site

- The consistent presence of on-site staff helps facilitate inclusion and a sense of community within housing with care schemes as they are able to build relationships with residents and play a key role in resolving disputes or disagreements between residents.

- A high turnover of staff, including estate managers, can negatively impact inclusion.

Staying connected with the local area

- Being close to shops and having good public transport links and bus stops in the vicinity help facilitate independence and inclusion.
- Being able to move to a scheme in a locality within which residents were already embedded prevents the need to entirely re-build social connections.

Listening to the views of residents

- There's growing recognition that a one-size-fits-all approach to housing won't meet the needs of our increasingly diverse ageing population.
- Listening to the views of older people in the wider community, as well as residents already living in housing with schemes, is therefore crucial to creating and maintaining living environments that are age-friendly and inclusive for all.

Creating inclusive physical environments and design

- The physical design of schemes can facilitate/hinder social interaction.

- Communal social spaces are vital to encouraging social inclusion.

- Balconies and outdoor spaces were key to maintaining connections during the COVID-19 lockdowns.

- Ramps and lifts for wheelchair user ensure the accessibility of schemes.

Providing adequate digital infrastructure

- Most residents taking part in our study used digital video and messaging platforms daily

- During the 2020 lockdowns, these tools were essential for keeping in touch with loved ones and for online essential activity, such as grocery shopping.

- But some schemes lack the necessary infrastructure to facilitate this digital communication.

Ensuring a supportive policy environment

- Older people's housing needs and aspirations, including those from social minorities, should be driving national housing policy, but a lack of integration of housing across national social care, health and equalities policy is currently preventing this from happening.

- The failure to adequately fund adult social care has made many private developers and providers unwilling to enter the market for publicly provided HCS.

- A lack of affordable and available land has also led to developers prioritising the building of large-scale settings to the detriment of developing smaller schemes, where residents have more proximity to each other and potentially more opportunities to develop supportive relationships.

Recommendations

For national government

- Improve the coordination between different Government Departments on HCS policy, including through setting up a Housing with Care Task Force, as advocated for by The Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO).

- Provide financial incentives for the creation of more HCS schemes, such as more grant funding for specialist housing, and to encourage more people to move into these schemes, such as through an exemption from Stamp Duty.

For local councils and commissioners

- Promote access to independent information and advice on the housing options available to older people in their local area.

- Work with providers and designers to create inclusive, age-friendly design and equality standards based on the Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) design principles and the Equality Act 2010.

- Require all proposals for new HCS schemes to meet these standards and encourage all existing HCS schemes to do the same by sharing examples of best practice.

- Invest in and approve plans for both specialist and inclusive mainstream schemes so potential residents have a wider choice of scheme to choose from.

For designers and architects

- Integrate social inclusion into the built environment of HCS schemes through meeting these design standards.

- Involve older people in the design of schemes, particularly disabled adults and people with care and support needs.

For housing providers, scheme managers and staff

- Gather and monitor demographic data on residents to better respond to their individual needs.

- Listen to the views of residents and include them in future plans for existing schemes.

- Prioritise employing on-site over off-site staff where possible • Provide regular training for staff and residents on inclusion and creating discrimination-free environments, including dementia awareness initiatives.

- Invest in providing adequate digital infrastructure to enable residents to maintain social connections virtually.

- Set expectations for new residents at point of entry to contribute to a culture of inclusion and encourage residents to reflect on what it means to be a 'good neighbour'.

Conclusion

- This project has cast light on the vital role housing with care schemes play in reducing social isolation and providing safe environments in which to grow old.

- However, our findings have shown that experiences of discrimination remain a reality for some residents, particularly people from social minorities.

- We have identified the interpersonal, organisational, physical and environmental factors that help promote social inclusion in housing with care schemes for older people.

- We need policymakers at a national and local level as well as commissioners, housing providers and scheme managers to make these factors universal and deliver more age-friendly, high-quality and inclusive housing for older people.

Methods

Methods	Who were the participants?
Hardcopy questionnaire	Self-completed by residents - 3,693 distributed to three providers across 104 schemes. 741 questionnaires received from 95 schemes
Longitudinal interviews (adapted to remote interviews from May 2020)	Series of interviews over 18 months with residents from minority groups (black and ethnic minority, LGB and trans, minority faith, disabled). 21 residents took part in at least 1 interview, 4 interviewed twice and 14 took part in all 3 interviews.
Semi-structured interviews (adapted to remote interviews from May 2020)	Staff at 8 housing schemes (n=21) Residents at 8 housing schemes (n=51, including 12 follow-up) Stakeholders – involved in commissioning, policy and advocacy work for older people (n=23)