

Developing place-based plans for older people's housing: Key learning

Background

In April 2024, SCIE published a toolkit that [supports local areas to develop their place-based plans for older people's housing](#). Funded by DHSC, the toolkit was co-developed with experts and it also aligns with one of the key recommendations from the [Commission on the Role of Housing in the Future of Care and Support](#) (2021), and the report from the [Older People's Housing taskforce](#) (2024). Both emphasise the importance of detailed local strategies that are evidence-based and developed and delivered by housing, health and social care, as well as by local communities and older people themselves. The toolkit emphasised the importance of co-production and partnerships working and is arranged into 10 steps.



Figure 1: An overview of the 10 steps of SCIE's housing toolkit



Between August 2024 and March 2025, SCIE worked with two local authorities, Bromley and Southend-on-Sea, drawing on the toolkit, to further their place-based plans for older people's housing.

This report briefly summarises key activities undertaken with each local area, describes progress as well as some of the challenges, summarises people's reflections on the toolkit, as well as how local authorities could be supported to develop and deliver housing plans for older adults.



Bromley

Background and identified challenges

Bromley are currently focussed on older adults who are council/housing benefit funded, and self-funders not far above that threshold. Their existing Housing with Care Strategy 2023-2033 outlines the next steps in relation to developing a detailed, evidence-based action plan and delivering it, but is not a detailed plan itself. The strategy includes co-production of the action plan. Bromley identified a need to strengthen their collaborative approach with housing, health and social care working together.

It was felt that there had already been some work completed on the earlier steps of the toolkit (understanding demand, mapping the current housing provision), but less on the later steps (understanding costs and benefits, and exploring commercial options). To develop Bromley's collaborative working approach, all stakeholders need to understand the potential benefits of developing more housing options for later living.

SCIE-supported activities

This section outlines the key activities SCIE led on, or contributed to, during the pilot.

- Undertook a national level evidence review of cost-benefits of extra care housing and housing with support (sheltered housing). This included:
 - Health savings
 - Social care savings
 - Benefits to individual/carers
 - Benefits to wider housing system
 - Other local benefits
- Undertook a review of funding options for developing more housing with care.
- Discussed Bromley's cost-benefit profile with the finance team, focusing on key lines of enquiry.
- Supported initial discussions with a potential developer/provider and Bromley, using the toolkit to shape the discussion and next steps.





“ The toolkit has already provided us with strategic and practical benefits ”

Progress

Overall

By the end of April, Bromley will have developed a proposal for extra care. The support helped Bromley to determine the potential developments and providers.

The toolkit has helped the Bromley team to focus on what aspects of a strategy have already been undertaken and what is still to do and why. Identifying which steps could be more relevant to wider stakeholder or partners has been a positive step towards developing a collaborative approach.



Step 7 - Assess costs and benefits

Bromley have a greater understanding of the potential benefits of extra care and supported housing and this has been shared with colleagues and discussed. This has been a starting point for setting out potential ways of working across teams.

The project helped the team focus on a clearer definition of extra care.



Step 8 - Reviewing findings with stakeholders

Bromley has made a start with some conversations with stakeholders and the work with SCIE has helped inform some of those conversations.



Step 9 – Explore commercial options

The list of funding opportunities is a helpful go-to and for discussions including in discussions with a developer/provider.

Applying the toolkit to a specific development opportunity

The toolkit supported a constructive early conversation with a potential developer/provider. The conversation naturally touched on various steps of the toolkit, but the toolkit helped create order, focus and simplify next steps.





Southend-on-Sea

Background and identified challenges

Southend previously commissioned a report from the Housing LIN into their housing provision for older adults, completed in 2022. It sets out the population, the gaps in housing provision and some examples of best practice. However, the report is not a strategy, rather it provides key information that can contribute to one.

The initial scope with Southend was to:

- Refresh and move forward with the Housing LIN report with a later living strategy that outlines the action to deliver.
- Consider how more groups could be involved in this strategy and how it could include co-production and/or more consultation.

SCIE-supported activities

This section outlines the key activities SCIE led on, or contributed to, during the pilot.

- Undertook a review of the Housing LIN report in relation to SCIE's toolkit. Identified what was already completed and the gaps, presenting this in a report.
- Based on the national-level evidence review of cost benefits of extra care housing for Bromley, this report was tailored to Southend.
- Planning and delivery of three workshops which were held in February and March.
 1. Online workshop with council teams. Participants considered the importance and potential for older people's housing and were introduced to SCIE's toolkit. They discussed what they wanted to achieve in Southend, what extra care should look like, and what needs to be included in a business plan.
 2. In-person workshop about extra care, with local older adults and local charities, representative groups and older people's services. They discussed what was important to them in relation to housing, advantages and disadvantages of extra care and the information they need to make decisions.
 3. Online workshop with providers, charities, developers and investors. They discussed their views on the future of later living housing, considerations when developing extra care and how the Council could help enable extra care.



“Without SCIE we would not have begun to lay the groundwork for moving forwards. We are in a better position than we were in the summer and have learned a lot.”

Progress

While there were some delays after the initial meeting, key areas of progress have been made which have built on Southend's existing strengths.

Overall

Southend has a better understanding of the work they have already undertaken and the structures they already have in place, as well as what work is yet to be undertaken and why it would be helpful. This is helping with future planning, including the development of the service planning priorities for the next financial year (2025/26).

A paper for the Corporate Leadership Team meeting is currently underway, led by the senior leaders in housing and in commissioning. The housing team are bringing together insights from SCIE's reports and the workshops and creating an internal working group.

Vision and leadership (including building a housing partnership)

Southend already had considerable interest in later living options, from across housing and social care. However, there were capacity constraints and the project did not have 'ownership' within a team. Workshop 1 was the first time this group of directors and senior leaders in housing, adult social care, commissioning, integration and finance, had been brought together to discuss extra care.



Step 4 - Identifying preferences and needs

Workshop 2 helped increase understanding about the needs and preferences of those in the older age group (over 80) and people who draw on services. The workshop enabled conversations with key local representative groups and has helped guide thinking about how to engage older age groups in the process.



Step 8 - Reviewing findings with stakeholders/developing a housing partnership

Workshop 3 was attended by a mix of charitable/not-for-profit providers/developers and registered housing providers. It was a positive start to engaging wider stakeholders in the development of a strategy. Attendees were direct about what they need from a local authority to develop extra care housing, including relationships and ethos, buy-in across health, housing and social care, and housing benefits. Parts of the discussion went against existing assumptions and helped identify areas to focus on going forward.



The reception following the first meeting was very positive and we thought 'OK we can do this' and we looked at each section and what needs doing



“ The toolkit really helped shape that early conversation with [developer/provider] ”

Toolkit reflections

Below is a summary of reflections on using the toolkit from Bromley and Southend

Overall

- The toolkit helps to make the process for developing a business case more systematic. It reinforces what is important and what information is needed.
- Having steps and a proposed order helps people to see how it fits together, but it's also flexible. By being able to use it in different ways it can be a tool and not just a task to do.
- The toolkit could be used to help shape investment or funding applications.
- The focus on definitions is helpful as people may not be on the same page.
- The toolkit prompts teams to avoid making assumptions or jumping over steps.
- The focus on co-production and partnership working in the toolkit is valuable, however it is hard to achieve.
- It would be good to see more about intergenerational options.



Step 5 - Understanding the commissioning landscape

While this step looked unnecessary at the start, once conversations widen out to other teams and partners, it becomes clear why stakeholders all need to understand what each other does, and why.



Step 7 - Assess costs and benefits

- The process, particularly the cost-benefits, moves the focus away from problems to a more positive approach to support people to see the benefits of extra care.
- It highlights benefits of the 'community' aspects of extra care and that you only reap the benefits if the provision is right, with a good mix of people living there.
- Calculating costs becomes much harder when looking at repurposing or refurbishing existing buildings and it would be helpful to signpost to examples.
- While extra care can create lots of benefits, more evidence is needed on showing the financial benefits to the local authority.

Supporting a collaborative approach

Working with and engaging landlords and providers as service-delivery partners could be included more in the toolkit.

Applying the toolkit to a specific development opportunity

- There was enthusiasm from the developer/provider who explained that the toolkit highlights key areas that local authorities need to have worked through before approaching developers.
- A business plan as outlined in the toolkit would provide confidence in who the developer/provider is working with, support understanding of what is wanted before putting lots of work in, and would indicate how they can work together with the local authority.



What could support local authorities to develop a business plan and deliver more housing options for older people?

Joint working and prioritisation

Local authorities and ICBs require a senior commitment and steer to ensure housing, health and social care work together.

Statutory responsibilities for local authorities are prioritised for funds and time, so a national steer from the government is needed to raise the priority of older people's housing. Housing, health and social care all need to have this steer otherwise joint working is a struggle from the start.

Local authorities would be more likely to develop a plan if it would increase the likelihood of getting capital funding for developments.


It would help if devolved approaches have an older people's steer and it would encourage more opportunities for jointly addressing older people's housing.

Resourcing and expertise to develop a business plan

Feedback was that the toolkit is very helpful, but the teams would have found it hard to make progress without the support from SCIE, both in terms of expertise and capacity.

Local authorities require resource across teams to develop and deliver a plan, including:

- Time to understand what developing a deliverable plan involves and requesting that resource from Cabinet (or equivalent).
- Resource for a strategy/project lead and from across teams to develop the plan.
- Expertise in this area and/or time for a lead person to fully engage with, understand and take forward the toolkit.
- Resource for co-production and stakeholder engagement as well as expertise. Some teams will need more support with this than others.
- Time to develop contact lists and strategies to engage local groups and stakeholders.



“ It is making the process of developing a business case more systematic, it is helpful to reinforce what is important and what we need to know to inform the case. It is helping to ask the right questions and helped to put housing with care in broader context. ”

Funding to develop housing

Having stability in funding and knowing earlier what the next financial year's funding offer would be, for example from GLA and Homes England, would help planning.

The Older People's Housing Taskforce was seen as valuable and indicating a direction of travel. Without capital funding, or a stated national-level plan, it was not clear how it could be implemented, particularly for the middle and lower-income market.

Funding sources are needed for 'upgrading' sheltered housing to extra care or other instances where changing the use of an existing building or site could be helpful. Support to understand the cost-benefits of refurbishments would help.

For local authorities to invest any capital funding, more evidence as to the return-on-investment to local authorities/social care is needed. Currently evidence tends to focus more on health outcomes while the funding is expected to come from local authorities.

Networking and best practice

Having a network or forum to be able to learn from other areas, and not only the ones already very advanced in their planning and delivery, would be helpful. Specific topics such as approaches to funding and co-production would be of value.

Events or activities where commissioners could meet with landlords and/or potential investors and developers would provide opportunities for conversations and asking questions before looking at ways of working.