



stonewall
housing



**NEW HOUSING
SCHEMES**



**BRINGING PEOPLE
TOGETHER**



**EVIDENCE OF
NEED & RESEARCH**



**BUILDING SAFE CHOICES:
LGBT HOUSING FUTURES**



**STAYING PUT,
STAYING SAFE**



**NATURALLY OCCURRING
RETIREMENT COMMUNITIES**



**INFORMATION,
ADVICE & ADVOCACY**



**CARE AND
SUPPORT**

Building safe choices

Older LGBT housing futures: feasibility study summary

Supported by:

commonweal + housing
Housing Solutions to Social Injustice



Our ambition is that older lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans¹ (LGBT) people, whatever their history and background, can make informed choices about their housing, care and support from a range of safe and appropriate options.

Building safe choices examined the current provision of housing and related care and support for older LGBT people. The findings are clear: there are still no specialist housing or care schemes for older LGBT people. Despite some providers setting out good intentions and improving their practice, older LGBT people are still uncertain about what they can expect in the future. Many fear the worst.

We believe this should change.

Stonewall Housing has been working since 1983 to help LGBT people of all ages find safe, secure and appropriate housing. In recent years we have strengthened our work with older people. We have established housing networks around the country, carried out local research and worked with housing providers to take forward their understanding of why housing and related support is so important for older LGBT people.

Our challenge is to build our organisation's capacity and partnerships to make the solutions identified in this report a reality so that more of our older generations do not spend their last days living in isolation and in poor, unsuitable housing.

Bob Green
CEO, Stonewall Housing

¹ *Trans is an inclusive, umbrella term used to describe the diversity of gender identity and expression for all people who do not conform to common ideas of gender roles.*

Our current concerns

From our review of research reports written over the previous 20 years, and feedback from current experts, some consistent themes emerge:

- there are diverse views about whether people have a preference for LGBT-specific housing or for mainstream, integrated housing with a clear understanding of LGBT needs;
- there is a desire for choice in finding suitable housing and support provision;
- home is particularly important for the older LGBT generation who often did not feel safe in the wider world: their home was their safe and private space;
- many older LGBT people have a fear of isolation.

Building new schemes

Key issues for new LGBT-friendly schemes:

- co-design and quality of build are important;
- safety and security, and location are critical;
- new schemes should include social spaces and community facilities, as well as links with the wider LGBT community;
- schemes should have a range of tenures, but affordability is key.

Bringing people together

Key issues for older LGBT people living together:

- there are no specialist LGBT co-housing schemes – two are being developed, in Brighton and London;
- co-housing schemes take time and commitment to develop, but provide good value and opportunities for creative housing solutions;
- shared housing can build on the experience of older LGBT people who have previously taken the positive decision to live together;
- shared housing can address issues of isolation, as well as helping those with a history of insecure housing.

Naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs)

Key issues for NORCs:

- they have the potential to be a model for building older LGBT communities;
- housing providers have a possible role to play in identifying suitable schemes that can become NORCs, and to work collaboratively with older LGBT people to support their growth;
- they could become an example of a successful older LGBT housing scheme that doesn't need additional investment.

Staying put, staying safe

Key issues for older LGBT people who want to stay living in general housing or in mainstream older people's housing:

- there are concerns about a lack of understanding and knowledge from housing, support and care staff, making people feel vulnerable to abuse;
- until there is consistent, widely available evidence, these concerns will remain;
- monitoring is critical, alongside an inclusive organisational culture, and staff training.

Care and support

Key issues for older LGBT people who want to access appropriate care and support:

- there is a lack of information about LGBT-appropriate care and support providers;
- no existing care schemes are focused specifically on the needs of older LGBT people;
- older LGBT people have similar concerns about care providers as they do about housing providers;
- if an organisation is being proactive about its LGBT residents, it should say so;
- Stonewall Housing is developing a chartermark with partners, aimed at housing and care and support organisations working with older people, to enable older LGBT people to access care and support with confidence.

Information, advice and advocacy

Finally, there is a need for information, advice and advocacy for older LGBT about their housing and care options. This will not only help them make suitable individual choices, but also enable them to build networks and providers to understand their needs.

Building safe choices

The Big Lottery and Commonweal Housing funded Stonewall Housing to carry out a feasibility study to look at housing options for older LGBT people.

Further information about the project, and a copy of the full feasibility study, is available at:

www.buildingsafechoices.org.uk.

Stonewall Housing

Stonewall Housing is the specialist lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans-spectrum (LGBT*) housing advice and support provider in England. We have been providing services to the LGBT* community for over 30 years.

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Our recommendations

1. To support and encourage the development of specialist older LGBT housing schemes across all tenures.
2. To encourage housing and care providers to develop good practice and greater understanding in their provision of services to the older LGBT community.
3. To develop a resource pool to bring together research, learning and experiences of older LGBT housing.
4. To work with housing providers and others on the development of a range of housing options in order to maximise the choice of housing available to older LGBT.
5. To provide advice and support to individuals and groups who want to work together to create their own housing and support solutions.
6. To build links and shared understanding of different housing options between providers and customers.

Add your voice to the debate:
www.buildingsafechoices.org.uk