In our *Breaking the mould* report we encouraged local authorities and housing providers to enhance the housing options available to people in later life and to ‘break the mould’ of older people’s housing.

The report describes a number of the business opportunities that an ageing population brings, particularly in the wider community. It also offers examples of how care, support and other practical services such as handyperson or ‘help at home’ services can be offered to older people in all types of tenure, including people who would pay for such a service from a trusted provider.

Housing associations across the country are already seizing the opportunities outlined in the report, and launching innovative housing and care solutions to cater for their local older population. Below are some examples of associations who are leading the way in re-visioning and re-modelling their offer for older people in order to cater for a growing and diverse group of older consumers.
Partnering to provide floating support

Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust and Arcon

Johnnie Johnson Housing Trust provides floating support to residents living in general needs accommodation managed by Arcon, a Manchester Association. Arcon uses the social alarm services from Astraline, JJHT’s in-house 24 hour call centre, and floating support is provided by one of JJHT’s scheme managers who works close to the Arcon properties.

Tenants who were keen to receive support were consulted, and optional support was developed including assistance with Housing Benefit and other claims; arranging visits from Welfare Rights advisors; arranging for adaptations and signposting tenants to appropriate medical support such as dementia services.

The two organisations agreed a six month pilot which started in May 2008 with the scheme manager visiting tenants one afternoon per week, initially creating a support plan for each tenant and then delivering or facilitating their support needs.

The service is fully funded by Arcon for its residents. JJHT is able to maximise the skills of current staff and extend these into the wider community, tapping into an extra income stream. As a result of their successes, Arcon’s Board of Management agreed to continue the funding for the original schemes.

The pilot achieved the following:

- Tenants were helped to obtain allowances including Council Tax, Disability Living and Carers allowance.
- Two deaf tenants were helped with hearing loop systems and alarms.
- Two tenants suffering from the onset of dementia were identified and referred to a memory clinic with the assistance of a mental health team.
- Two flats have received adaptations to kitchen taps, and grab rails on stairs and lounge.
- One 95 year old tenant was identified with mobility problems and was successfully helped to obtain a wheelchair through social services.
- Two tenants who were initially in receipt of a minimal care package were identified as struggling with cooking and successfully applied for a re-assessment to include Meals on Wheels.
- One tenant was confused with their medication. It was arranged for a chemist to provide dotsette packs for easier identification and monitoring.

Age-friendly housing with extra care

Heald Farm Court

Opened in autumn 2009, Helena Partnerships’ award-winning Heald Farm Court development in Merseyside offers quality accommodation for over 55’s, with on-site care support which is responsive to the changing needs of residents.

The purpose-built extra care scheme provides 89 self-contained homes – apartments and bungalows – through mixed tenure, including rent, shared ownership and outright sale in response to the current property market. The apartments offer attractive living space, some with balconies and gardens, with fully-fitted kitchens and en-suite shower rooms. Facilities include a bistro, lounges, therapy room, activity room and a hairdresser, a mobility scooter store, visitors’ accommodation, and landscaped gardens. The layout of a central hub supports social interaction, which can be a real lifeline to some residents.

Heald Farm Court provides an excellent new housing option for people to downsize or take advantage of shared ownership opportunities. It offers people the chance to maintain independent living, but with the added peace of mind that care support will be available – and adaptable – to their needs as they grow older.

Through close partnerships with St Helens Council, DK Architects, Cruden Construction and MHA Care Group, the scheme has already been a huge success, not only as the first ever winner of a HAPPI award to recognise best practice in providing age-friendly housing but also in providing quality housing and care for an aging population.

There are already around 70,000 people aged 60+ in urgent need of housing and related support services

Our Breaking the Mould report identified that older people wanted a home that:

1. Is accessible
2. Is spacious and attractive
3. Is safe and secure
4. Is in an age-friendly environment
5. Offers freedom, choice and flexibility
6. Has help at hand
7. Provides flexible, personalised support
8. Lets you socialise and feel included
9. Allows you to make decisions.
Getting out and about for older residents

Large numbers of older people in this country currently live alone. Data from the Projecting Older People Population Information System (POPPI) predicted that by 2010, over 2m people over 75 would be living alone in the UK. Our report highlighted the need to address social isolation of older people, particularly amongst those who have health or mobility issues that prevent them from getting out into the community.

Pickering and Ferens Homes

Pickering and Ferens Homes, a specialist older persons housing association, has an officer dedicated to developing and running a wide range of enrichment activities for residents.

Activities include coffee mornings, Garden in Bloom and Good Neighbour competitions as well as organising social events and day trips - encouraging residents to stay active and take pride in their home and neighbourhood. Coffee mornings are not only a good opportunity for residents to get together but also allows guests to provide information on a wide range of topics, for example benefits, and keeping fit.

This year coach trips have been organised to urban and rural markets, garden centres, stately homes and the coast. Trips are so popular they are usually over-subscribed, and a loyalty card scheme has now been developed for regular users. Residents can save up points for a free excursion. Such is the popularity of the range of community development activities that they are featured in an avidly received dedicated newsletter. For many residents, the highlight of the range of community development activities is an annual party held at a local club which has a buffet, variety artists, raffle, singing and dancing.

The day trips are also open to the wider community - at a pound extra cost per trip for a non-resident - so long as the age criteria are met. This helps to promote the organisation as a potential accommodation provider for other members of the local community and enables residents who may not have been able to attend an activity without support to attend.

The various activities have been effective in helping keep their residents active, and also creating a sense of resident involvement beyond the wide range of more traditional resident involvement activities the association offers.

The organisation believes that offering a range of involvement activities has helped them to achieve the very high satisfaction ratings in their last STATUS survey, with 96.5% of residents reporting being either very or fairly satisfied with the overall services provided.
The transition to extra care

Moorlands Court

In a joint venture with Cambridge Community Services and South Cambs District Council, CHS Group (Cambridge Housing Society Ltd Group) has developed a purpose-built 35-unit extra care facility.

Existing residents in Moorlands Residential Care Home in Melbourn were moved into the new facility in the grounds of their existing home, which was then demolished. This relocation of frail older people from residential care into a more independent environment such as extra care was quite unique, and the planning consultation with stakeholders was therefore extensive. Relatives were particularly anxious that the excellent care received through the existing 3* care home could be reproduced in an extra care facility, that their relative would cope physically and emotionally with the move, and how this change would affect them financially.

Residents and families needed time and support from CHS managers to explore the concept of extra care and what this change would mean in practical terms for their relative.

The move was also a demand on staff, who needed to be supported through the change from delivering a service based on residential care standards and principles to one based on domiciliary care standards and delivering a community-based service. This involved major changes in working practices and terms and conditions, a process managed by the HR department and the Extra Care services manager.

As well as being the registered social landlord for the scheme, CHS subsequently registered as a domiciliary care agency with CSCI (now the Care Quality Commission), and, in open-competition, won the contract to deliver personal care for residents, at the new Moorlands Court.

Since April 2008 staff have monitored tenants’ functional independence (34 tenants) using a modified Functional Independence Measure and a quality of life measure. Over a six-month period, 20 people showed improved function or increased independence in activities of daily living, 12 remained stable and two deteriorated owing to progressive dementia rather than environmental factors.

This move has allowed CHS to upgrade the accommodation offered to the residents of the existing and now outdated care home to supported living in a ‘home for life’. It has allowed the expansion of their business into extra care services with potential to expand into other areas of community care provision, particularly important in a climate of personalisation. The new facilities are designed to provide a focus for community activities and services such as luncheon clubs and meeting rooms.