

Making informed decisions on housing options: the value of advice and support for older people

ENHR Conference 2013

Drs Gemma Burgess & Nicky Morrison

Structure

- Decision to move or not to move as people age.
 - FirstStop - national advice and support service to aid decision making and prevent crises, help plan ahead.
 - Extent can assist older people in making informed decisions on ways to plan ahead as their housing and care needs change.
 - Conceptual frameworks of residential decision making.
 - In-depth interviews.
- > *How advice and support on housing options improves decision making process and alters housing outcome.*

Conceptual frameworks of residential decision making

- Person-environment framework.
 - Developmental framework.
 - Push-pull framework.
 - Residential satisfaction.
-
- Need for focus on decision making process.
 - Role of information, advice and support – “framing effect.”
 - Importance of qualitative research.

FirstStop

- Independent, free service.
- Elderly Accommodation Counsel - partnership with other national and local organisations.
- Delivers information and advice through a national telephone helpline and website.
- Local housing options services – face to face.
- Over 170,000 people in 2011/12.
- Just over 2000 intense face to face support.

Local services

East
East Midlands
London
North West
South East
South West
West Midlands
Yorkshire &
Humberside

Major funders:

Welcome to FirstStop!



FirstStop Advice is an independent, free service provided by the national charity Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) in partnership with other **local and national** and organisations.

The service is for older people, their families and carers. It aims to help you get the help or care you need to live as independently and comfortably as possible.

You can access FirstStop Advice through this website, our national Advice Line or one of our local partner organisations.

 [View our brochure A fresh approach to later life](#)

 [More about the website](#)

 [More about our national advice line](#)

 [More about our local partner services](#)

If you're not looking for advice at the moment, and just need information, then flick over to our HousingCare pages. There you will find:

- Online **reading**, organised under the headings care, housing and funding

Quick Links

Latest news



Funding Opportunity: applications invited for new housing options services

The Department for Communities and Local Government has confirmed continued funding for EAC FirstStop,


Advice for older people

FirstStop residential manager for

Qualitative case study research

- CCHPR undertaking evaluation of FirstStop since 2009.
- ENHR paper focus on medium/long term effects of using service.
- Focus on follow up case studies to evaluate advice/support from local FirstStop partners.
- Detailed file notes, case studies.
- In depth 21 interviews with older adults.

Findings

1. Supported to remain living independently in current home:

(7 out of 21) - chronic health problems – adaptations/repairs, income maximisation, de-cluttering.

2. Supported to move to more appropriate accommodation:

(14 out of 21) - living in unsuitable housing, chronic health problems, at risk of homelessness, discharged from hospital after illness.

Findings

- 52% OO, 29% PRS, 19% general needs social housing.
 - 76% living alone, 24% married couples.
 - Housing suitable before health and mobility deteriorated and when could afford to maintain properties.
 - Third self referred, rest referred by other services.
 - Struggling at home, vulnerable through illness and disability.
 - Stairs – access to bathrooms and bedrooms.
 - Cluttered, unhygienic conditions and housing in disrepair, poor or no central heating.
- > poor fit between household and housing conditions.

Outcomes from using FirstStop

- More confident in making decisions.
- More informed, more aware of options, more able to choose.
- Live independently, or semi-independently:
 - “It is mine and I can do what I like here. There’s a lot to being independent. Independence is everything”.
- Couldn’t have done it/wouldn’t have known without FirstStop advice and support.
- What would have happened?
 - Worsened health, wellbeing, quality of life, homelessness.
 - Loss of independence, access around the home, lower incomes.

Advice & Support – ageing in place

- Adaptations, access to grants and funding e.g. DFGs.
- Walk in showers, wet rooms, stair lifts, wheelchair access.
- Repairs.
- Additional support services e.g. cleaning, gardening.
- Heating improvements.
- Safety and security measures.
- Income maximisation.
- Retain independent living.
- Support – someone to talk to.

Example

- Owner occupier couple, disrepair, lack of heating, struggling with ordinary tasks e.g. taps – kept him awake at night worrying.
 - “We would have struggled to get the roof done as we have no savings. It would have been a problem and is such a relief.... It really helped us. I was worrying about not being able to turn the taps off, especially the hot taps which was dangerous and it was painful....We are happier at home now”.
- Owner occupier, single lady.
 - “She helped me to increase my benefits and she was wonderful....The heating system is very good and Warm Front were marvellous..... I don't have to worry about the bill now. And I can treat myself to some extra food that is more luxurious like salmon or a packet of chocolate biscuits that I couldn't afford before. The money has made a difference and it is all thanks to [case worker]”.

Advice & Support – to move

- Lists of suitable accommodation, calling HAs/providers of sheltered housing to find available properties, putting people on the waiting list for social or sheltered housing, advocating on behalf of the client to increase their points on the waiting list, helping them to bid for and view properties to secure new accommodation.
- Advice on the financial aspects.
- Helped owner occupiers sell their house and put people in contact with estate agents and solicitors. Helped people to pack and unpack, move boxes and change utility providers.
- Helped people to access charity or grant funding for furniture or white goods.
- Support – someone to talk to.

Case study example

- Elderly woman in PRS first floor bedsit in a shared house.
- Cockroaches.
- Limited mobility, access ground floor kitchen by stairs on hands and knees. Uncomfortable, distressed.
- Ground floor flat with HA in sheltered scheme.
- Health improved.
- “Without the help I would still be living there. The cockroaches used to come on my bed at night on me when I was sleeping.... Now I have my own shower, toilet, sitting room and kitchen. And it is on the ground floor so there are no stairs. It is so convenient and so comfortable. I feel happy, very happy. The lady went out of her way to help me. She helped me so much and I am so grateful. She gave so much time and it was a personal touch. She still comes to see me from time to time and pops in”.

Discussion

- *Person-environment model* - poor match between individual and current housing situation, further declines in quality of life, as lack of competence to cope e.g. deteriorating health.
- FirstStop helped to improve the fit between the individual and their housing, preventing further declines in their quality of life and in most cases improving it.
- *Developmental framework* - at risk of third stage moves to institutional care - delayed or prevented - able to make “anticipatory” move.

Discussion

- *Push-pull framework* - movers had strong push factors, low residential satisfaction, but vague or no moving plans.
- Helped them to make and follow through a moving plan.
- From a push to a pull.
- Advice/support acted as a “framing effect” altering the way viewed *gains* of moving and *losses* of leaving current home.

- *Residential satisfaction framework* - owner occupiers/longer residency prefer to age in place - having less strong push factors and higher residential satisfaction.
- FirstStop extended opportunity to live independently for longer.
- A tension may exist between older person’s wish and what is realistic.

Conclusions

- To stay or move - complex minefield - lots of pressures.
- Importance of research that traces decision making over course of time - from receiving advice/support to taking action.
- Advice & support empowers older people to decide between housing options - altering way view gains & losses.
- Put in place housing solution best suit individual - improves housing outcomes.
- Delay or prevent need for higher intensity institutional care (changes what would have happened).
- Policy implications - recognising the value-added of advice/support services.

Cambridge Centre
for Housing &
Planning Research

<http://www.cchpr.landecon.cam.ac.uk/>

ENHR Conference 2013