Dataspring

The pilot RSR 2005

Monitoring sheltered and supported housing

Full report

Dawn Marshall, Fiona Lyall Grant and Christine Whitehead

November 2004

DATASPRING

Executive summary

INTRODUCTION

- The objective of any modification made to the RSR is to improve the quality of information for regulatory purposes in the light of changing policy.

- Changes in policy with respect to Supporting People, funding and diversity within the HA sector make it imperative to improve the definitions of sheltered and supported housing and to collect a rather different range of information about these categories of HA stock.

- The research used a pilot RSR and qualitative surveys to test the definitions and to measure the impact of change.

THE CHANGES PILOTED FOR THE RSR 2005

- CURS developed a set of descriptions for the Pilot RSR that reflected the Corporation's new focus on the facilities and design features available in housing intended for older people. In the case of supported housing, the description additionally included designation criteria.

- The descriptions also reflect the range of information that potential tenants need to have available to make informed choices about the housing in which they wish to live.

- The description for retirement housing had been adopted as Housing Corporation policy prior to the study, and could therefore not be changed. No prior decision had been made in relation to the descriptions of supported housing. As a result for retirement housing, only the terminology, not the descriptions were open to modification. In contrast, the description of supported housing could be changed in response to issues highlighted in the research.

- The overall net impact on the RSR dataset was anticipated to be an increase in the number of general needs units and a reduction in units described as retirement or supported housing.

CHANGES TO SHELTERED HOUSING DEFINITIONS

- Because decisions had already been made as to the new descriptions of sheltered housing the objective of the research was to ensure these descriptions meet the Housing Corporation’s objectives as effectively as possible.

- Considerable concern was displayed about the choice of the term retirement housing. As a result, despite initial reluctance, the Housing Corporation agreed that 'Housing for older people' was a better replacement for sheltered housing. Contextualisation of the RSR approach is still required as the Housing Corporation's policy applies to a wider range of housing options for this client group than is included in the RSR descriptions. In particular, age is not a pre-requisite to access this housing.

- Both because of the narrower definition of the stock categorised as 'housing for older people' in the context of the RSR and general concerns raised during the research, a circular exemplifying the application of the RSR descriptions is required to ensure accurate reporting.

- Clarification of the descriptions is also required to ensure accurate reporting. It is

essential that the descriptions are clear because of their reliance on property based information. As it will be necessary to survey stock on this basis, it is also essential that the descriptions are communicated to HAs sufficiently in advance of the RSR 2005 to enable them to re-categorise stock on internal information systems.

- Analysis of data provided by HAs indicates a potential decrease of 17-18% in the number of units recorded in RSR data in 2005 as compared to 2004. As a result, housing for older people will be less important in the overall profile of HA housing.

CHANGES TO SUPPORTED HOUSING DEFINITIONS

- The description of supported housing included in the Pilot RSR incorporated a number of changes in comparison to the initial description of supported housing provided by CURS. Further clarification of the descriptions proved necessary to ensure accurate reporting in the RSR 2005.

- The most significant point of clarification was to ensure that when stock is broken down by activity type up-front in the RSR, the two categories - of housing for older people and supported housing - are mutually exclusive.

- Analysis of the Pilot RSR highlighted the fact that stock designated for older people with support in place (as opposed to access to support) had been included incorrectly as designated supported housing in the Pilot RSR. In order to ensure that this is not the case in the 2005 RSR dataset, an additional category of housing for older people is warranted - Designated Supported Housing for Older People.

- The terms ‘purpose designated’ and ‘purpose designed’ supported housing were considered too similar and needed to be more clearly distinguished. This could be achieved by changing the terminology to 'designated' and 'purpose designed' supported housing in the 2005 RSR.

- Analysis of data returned in the Pilot RSR indicated that the new approach resulted in a potential net decrease of 16-18% in owned supported housing units between 2004 and 2005. Around half of this loss resulted from the re-categorisation of units receiving floating support to general needs housing.

- The way in which floating support is now funded under Supporting People means that it is no longer possible for HAs to provide accurate data about floating support to tenants in the sector. As a result, data on HAs' involvement in floating support and the number of HA tenants receiving floating support should be sourced from Supporting People Client Record data from 2005 and not from the RSR.

- The re-categorisation of supported housing was not simply to general needs within social housing. Some supported housing had been re-categorised as non-social housing and vice versa.

OTHER ISSUES IMPACTING ON THE RSR 2005

- While the recategorisation of stock under the new approach resulted in changes in average rent levels and service charges, these changes were not significant in the majority of cases. In any comparative analysis of rent levels between 2004 and 2005 RSR data, the results will need to be evaluated against details of relevant stock in order to ensure that the findings are meaningful.

- The majority of HAs could provide more detailed information about supported housing rents from existing information systems - by property type and size and by local authority area. As these data are already available in the majority of cases, the

findings indicate that the burden of providing this additional information is minimal for the majority of HAs.

- On the other hand, the findings indicate that providing supported housing target rents data is likely to be less straightforward for many HAs. It is therefore important that the Housing Corporation reviews the value of these data. Similarly, clearer guidance should be provided to ensure data needs are transparent with respect to target rents especially with respect to the data.

- In line with the Housing Corporation's adoption of 'Housing for Older People' as the new terminology to replace sheltered housing, Leasehold Schemes for the Elderly will be known as 'Leasehold Housing for Older People' from 2005.

- Feedback from HAs indicated that a range of areas of the Guidance Notes would require clarification in order to ensure accurate and consistent reporting in the RSR 2005.

GENERAL FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH

- The research differed from earlier work in that the definitions had already been tested in other contexts and there was already general agreement about the definitions to use.

- The terminology was however, still unclear from the point of view of HAs. Changes were agreed to ‘Housing for Older People’, to ‘Purpose Designed’ and ‘Designated’ Supported Housing. To ensure categories were mutually exclusive the category Designated Supported Housing for Older People was introduced within Housing for Older People.

- Pilot results indicated that there would be a reduction of 16-18% of units formerly returned as sheltered housing and a similar proportionate reduction in units formerly returned as supported housing.

- The change in definition has implications for target rents data and Leasehold Schemes for the Elderly – now to be designated Leasehold Housing for Older People.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE RSR 2005

- The research suggested that there would be significant one-off costs associated with the recommended changes.

- The final set of eleven recommendations covered:
    1. the definitions of Housing for Older People.
    2. the descriptions of Housing for Older People.
    3. the definitions of Supported Housing.
    4. the descriptions of Supported Housing.
    5. how to address floating support.
    6. the information required on supported housing rents and service changes.
    7. the contextualisation and exemplification required for the new approach.
    8. the need for a new definition of general needs housing.
    9. the new terminology for leasehold schemes.
    10. changes required to the RSR 2005 Guidance Notes.
    11. technical changes to the electronic form.

- These recommendations have helped inform the RSR 2005 which is now available on the Corporations website.

Chapter one

Introduction

Changes in policy, notably with respect to Supporting People, bring with them the need to update the RSR in line with regulatory and monitoring requirements.

Research related to the requirements of HAs and their frontline staff suggests a need for change.

The objective of the research was to pilot new definitions with respect to sheltered and supported housing and to ensure that the RSR more clearly represents the physical stock owned and managed by HAs.

1.1. Background

The Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research have been working with the Housing Corporation since 1998 to ensure that the data returned in the Regulatory and Statistical Return (RSR) are as accurate and as meaningful as possible whilst ensuring that the burden of the RSR is minimised wherever possible. The key to this has been to consult HAs at every stage about their operational realities and develop the RSR with the sector rather than merely impose it.

The RSR is administered by the Housing Corporation annually and provides an annual census of the housing association (HA) sector[1] . This is important not only to the regulator but also, amongst others, to stakeholders in HA activities, such as local authorities, policy and strategy makers and researchers. It is important for the regulator that the data requested in the RSR are those required to make judgements both about individual organisations and the sector as whole. The RSR also serves as a tool for monitoring the impact of changes in housing and related social policy.

Changes to the RSR relating to data requested about supported and sheltered housing from 2005 are required for two key reasons:

- the RSR needs to reflect the new policy approach to funding support in housing – Supporting People; and
- the Housing Corporation wishes to simplify and clarify definitions of sheltered and supported housing.

The principle on which these changes are to be made is that the RSR should provide detailed information about the stock that HAs own and manage, in order effectively to regulate the sector and monitor the use of public funds.

1.1.1. Introduction of supporting people

The Housing Corporation's role with respect to supported housing changed when the

[1] For the purposes of this report the term housing association (HA) refers only to those social landlords that are registered with the Housing Corporation - Registered Social Landlords (RSLs). The converse also applies.

Supporting People policy went live on 1 April 2003. The Housing Corporation is no longer responsible for providing revenue funding via Supported Housing Management Grant (SHMG) for support services provided by HAs to tenants requiring a supported style of housing management. The funding previously set aside for SHMG now forms part of the overarching Supporting People fund and is no longer distinguished separately from which all support services are funded. The Housing Corporation, therefore, no longer funds or regulates these activities.

The focus of responsibility for the Housing Corporation with respect to sheltered and supported housing has consequently changed. This has implications for the level of detailed information that the Housing Corporation needs about support services provided by HAs to tenants and others. It also has implications for the way in which the HA stock is viewed and categorised. The need to distinguish stock that does receive support and that which does not receive support (general needs) is not as vital now that SHMG has disappeared from the Corporation's funding remit.

Nevertheless, the Housing Corporation still has an interest in knowing about housing designed and/or designated for tenants requiring a supported style of housing on a number of levels that reflect its continuing role as regulator of the overall sector. For example:

- Investment: although revenue funding (via SHMG) has shifted to Supporting People, capital funding arrangements enable the Housing Corporation to offer higher grant rates for supported housing schemes. Therefore the Housing Corporation is still subsidising the housing designed and designated for tenants requiring a supported style of housing management although not the support provided.

- Regulation: the Housing Corporation needs to know what is going on with HA stock generally and within individual HAs. In the case of individual HAs, this requirement relates to the need to manage risk and ensure that a HA is operating within the Regulatory Code and meeting its requirements.

- Rent restructuring: the Housing Corporation has commitments to monitor and regulate the movement towards target rents in the HA sector. The timetable and some requirements are different for supported and sheltered housing. Technically, rent restructuring began in 2002 but HAs could postpone the timetable for supported and sheltered housing until 2003.

- The wider role of the Housing Corporation: the Housing Corporation needs information about the diversity of activities undertaken and stock owned by HAs to act effectively in setting strategy for the sector and developing policy.

- Performance indicators: with the aim of encouraging benchmarking and the continuous development of good practice, the Housing Corporation publishes performance indicators (PIs) from RSR data. The value of performance information is reduced if the data from which they are calculated are not clearly defined in the RSR.

The future focus of data collection is on assisting the Housing Corporation in its responsibility to ensure that funds for both existing and new buildings built with Social Housing Grant are correctly and wisely administered. In order to do this the Housing Corporation requires accurate information on this provision. The implication is that the accurate identification of this provision must be facilitated by clear and concise definitions used for the purposes of data collection.

1.1.2. Better definitions of sheltered and supported housing

Housing for older people takes many forms and includes a wide spectrum of housing types. Older people can be enabled to live independently in housing with few adaptations; at the other end of the spectrum, some older people require nursing care and the design features of this housing reflect the nature of the care provided - over and above the range of features required for independent living. In the past this spectrum of housing was 'categorised' via terminology such as category 2, category 2.5., extra care, frail elderly, etc. The problem with this approach to describing housing for older people was two fold. First, the categorisations were not applied consistently by HAs and second, the approach was not transparent in that it did not describe the housing available sufficiently clearly to enable older people and front line workers to make decisions about their most suitable housing options.

In 1995, the Housing Corporation made a commitment to produce better definitions of sheltered housing for HAs. It has pursued this commitment in collaboration with researchers at the Centre for Urban and Regional Studies (CURS) at Birmingham University. Since 1997 CURS have been conducting research with the aim of developing more appropriate definitions of sheltered housing. Recently this research has focused on supported housing definitions more generally (see Chapter two).

Research on the accuracy and appropriateness of RSR data undertaken in 1999 by the Centre for Housing and Planning Research identified sheltered housing, and to a lesser extent supported housing, as areas of inaccurate reporting in the data set. This underlined the clear need to develop definitions for use in the RSR that reflect the operational realities of HAs, as well as meeting the regulatory needs of the Housing Corporation.

Quality and Choice for Older People: A Strategic Framework, published by the Department of Health and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) in January 2001, sets out clear principles for housing and other services to meet the needs and wishes of the older population. The Housing Corporation's policy, Housing for Older People (2002), follows the same line of thinking. In particular the Housing Corporation recognises the central importance of ensuring that older people are able to make informed choices about the kind of housing they wish to live in and of ensuring a wide variety of housing types are available so that older people can exercise such choice. Housing associations and other providers have a vital role to play in providing clear information to lder people, service commissioners, relatives and carers.

In 2003, the Housing Corporation adopted a three-tier sheltered housing description developed by CURS, as reported in Towards a Common Currency (CURS). Whilst important for strategy and the day to day operations of HAs, particularly at the front line, the long descriptions that have been adopted are not suitable for the RSR. Therefore RSR friendly descriptions based on the new CURS approach to both sheltered and supported housing needed to be developed and piloted.

1.2. Aims of the pilot study: Ensuring appropriate changes and definitions in the RSR 2005

The aims of the study were therefore four-fold:

1. To apply and develop a new approach to defining and collecting information about sheltered and supported housing via the RSR that is transparent and proportional to the regulator's need for information at 31 March 2005.
2. To evaluate the extent to which new definitions used to capture information on sheltered and supported housing are both appropriate to the Housing

Corporation's data needs and reflect operational realities of HAs in the context of the new funding and regulatory regime for support services under Supporting People.

3. To ensure that the approach to collecting data about sheltered and supported housing provides the Housing Corporation with the minimum data that they need to regulate HAs effectively whilst minimising any additional burden of reporting for HAs and the extent to which the new approach is at odds with internal reporting.
4. To identify what impact the changes will have on the RSR data series in relation to data used to produce key performance indicators and to regulate and monitor other specific policies and regulatory requirements such as data on voids, rents, target rents and staffing ratios.

1.3. The approach

The approach used had three stages in the research, including eleven separate steps:

Stage one: Background and development of the pilot RSR

- Background and literature review.
- Establishing what the Housing Corporation needs to know about the supported and sheltered housing stock via discussions with regulation and policy officers at Maple House.
- Identifying any existing or developing data sources from which these data could be extracted.
- Based on the findings of steps 1 to 3, and using the new definitions developed by CURS in short code format, developing an approach to collecting data in the RSR for use in the pilot study.
- Seeking feedback on a draft Pilot RSR from three sources via meetings/ scoping: the Housing Corporation, CURS and HAs.
- Agreements on the form of the Pilot RSR with the Housing Corporation.

Stage two: Piloting and evaluating the proposals

- Pilot the definitions and changes via a survey to a sample of fifty HAs. HAs were requested to return data in the Pilot RSR and were invited to provide feedback in a questionnaire and in some cases, also a short telephone inter view.
- Compile a database from the results of the pilot survey. This dataset was compared to the 2003 RSR dataset for participating HAs. The analysis aimed to identify what the impact of the changes on the RSR dataset and regulatory information are likely to be.
- Evaluate and report on the implications of the feedback received and the findings of the data analysis to the Housing Corporation.

Stage three: Findings and final recommendations

- Make final changes to the definitions and Pilot RSR.
- Submit a final report with recommendations to the Housing Corporation.

The pilot RSR sample

Ideally, any new approach would have been piloted with all large HAs as this would produce a transitional dataset that would be useful in maintaining the RSR dataset and time-series. A sample of this size was, however, unrealistic. The aim was to secure completion of a Pilot RSR and feedback from 50 HAs.

It was difficult to find sufficient HAs to complete the Pilot RSR that would provide a balanced sample. The researchers endeavoured to ensure that the sample did not consist only of HAs that predominantly own sheltered or supported housing, although it

did include both small and large HAs with this stock profile. Inclusion of HAs with significant numbers of both general needs and supported/sheltered housing was important to measure the impact of changes on general needs data and the interface between the two elements.

In total, only 37 out of the 68 HAs approached to complete a Pilot RSR participated in the research. Of these participating HAs, 25 completed a full Pilot RSR and 24 of these were returned in time to be included in the quantitative analysis. Many of the big players in sheltered and supported housing are missing from the sample. Generally, the nature of non-respondence means that the sample is skewed towards HAs with supported housing. Equally the responses from those who actually filled in the Pilot RSR are often quite different from those who only filled in the questionnaires. We therefore report the findings for each category separately.

1.4. This report

Chapter two provides an account of the development of the changes introduced in the Pilot RSR and summarises the implications of these changes in the RSR context.

Chapter three focuses on the piloted changes to the description of sheltered housing. It summarises what information the Pilot RSR requested; what was returned; what HAs thought of the changes; and the implications of these findings for the RSR 2005.

Chapter four focuses on the piloted changes to the description of supported housing. It summarises what information the Pilot RSR requested; what was returned; what HAs thought of the changes; and the implications of these findings for the RSR 2005.

Chapter five considers other changes that were piloted - what we asked for, what we got and the implications. It also identifies issues arising that are relevant to the development of the RSR 2005.

Chapter six summarises the findings of the evaluation and the implications of these for the Housing Corporation and the RSR 2005.

Chapter seven includes recommendations for the Housing Corporation and the RSR 2005 resulting from the Pilot RSR.

The Annex provides details of the project sample and outlines the methodology used in the analysis of the Pilot RSR and RSR 2003 data sets.

SUMMARY

- The objective of any modification made to the RSR is to improve the quality of information for regulatory purposes in the light of changing policy.

- Changes in policy with respect to Supporting People, funding and diversity within the HA sector make it imperative to improve the definitions of sheltered and supported housing and to collect a rather different range of information about these categories of HA stock.

- The research used a pilot RSR and qualitative surveys to test the definitions and to measure the impact of change.

Note: A detailed quantitative analysis of the Pilot RSR survey findings is included in a separate technical report to the Housing Corporation and will be used in the analysis of RSR data between 2004 and 2005.

Chapter two

The changes piloted for the RSR 2005

The starting point for developing a new approach to describing sheltered and supported housing in the RSR 2005 was the framework for identifying this type of housing that had been developed by CURS to assist frontline workers.

With respect to sheltered housing, there was little scope to make any significant modifications for the purposes of the RSR because the Housing Corporation had already adopted an agreed three-tiered approach for policy purposes. With respect to supported housing, the descriptions provided by CURS were open to more substantial change if required, because Housing Corporation policy had not been finalised at the time of the study.

This chapter sets out the short descriptions provided by CURS that are based on the fuller front-line approach that they had developed. It also summarises the implications of the changes made to the RSR.

2.1. RSR changes and *Towards a Common Currency*

The starting points for the research was the development of new descriptions affecting sheltered and supported housing. Those new descriptions are a direct result of research findings taken from *Towards a Common Currency* report to be published by the University of Birmingham and the Housing Corporation in PDF format and posted on the CURS, University of Birmingham website, with links to Peter Fletcher Associates (PFA) and the Housing Corporation. This research on definitions and descriptions was undertaken in two stages, starting in 1997. The primary focus was housing for older people with the purpose of bringing outdated definitions and descriptions into line with modern thinking and policy. The first stage considered the impact of the development of care in the community on sheltered and supported housing and changes that might be necessary. The result was a model set of criteria on which better descriptions of housing options could be based. These criteria were subject to consultation with a wide variety of stakeholders. The second stage concentrated on further development and testing of the descriptions in 'live' case studies.

The final result is a framework that uses simple definitions that are underpinned by comprehensive housing and support service descriptions. They have a wider currency than housing associations (HAs) – they provide shared meanings that can be used between housing, social care and health commissioners when formulating integrated strategies.

From 2005 the definitions and descriptions of sheltered housing used for the purposes of the RSR will change. The proposed changes reflect the Housing Corporation's policy of encouraging housing associations to enable older people to make informed choices about the types of housing that they want to live in and further reflect the Housing Corporation's intentions to invest in new housing that enables older people to age in place. They also fully reflect the impact of the Supporting People policy. However,

because the CURS framework had been developed for the benefit of consumers and front-line workers, it did not fit easily into a survey approach where clearly defined areas of housing activity are required. It was therefore clear that the descriptions would need to be contextualised in relation to the RSR.

2.1.1 Proposed changes for the 2005 RSR: Sheltered housing

In terms of the RSR, the Housing Corporation's new data requirement is to identify properties that are primarily intended for older people and have a range of basic facilities over and above general needs accommodation. In addition, these properties may have some or all of an identified list of design features that are incorporated with the purpose of enabling people to live there for the rest of their lifetimes. Access to support must be available but not necessarily in place. The Housing Corporation acknowledges that HAs are providing a wider range of specialist stock. However, they only need to know about a subset of this, that containing specified special design features to a minimum standard. The focus of the RSR on design features does not make the wider range invalid in any way.

In line with this, the intention was to 'describe' the housing that the RSR is interested in knowing about rather than 'defining' it. With this remit, CURS developed the following description for the Pilot RSR:

Going out of use in 2005

- The Housing Corporation will no longer use sheltered housing as a term or definition. Equally, the terms - Categories 1, 1.5, 2 and 2.5. will no longer be used.

- The terms 'general needs sheltered housing' and 'supported sheltered housing' that were used in the RSR between 2002 and 2004 will not be used in the 2005 and later RSRs.

PROPOSED NEW DESCRIPTIONS FOR 2005

General needs housing: This covers both ordinary housing and sheltered housing that does not have any special design features to enable older people to age in place (the special design features are specific to the building and they are shown below). Housing associations may, of course, continue to make schemes that are covered by the general needs definition available to older people and offer them as one of the choices older people have available to them.

Retirement housing with access to support: This covers remodelled or purpose built grouped sheltered housing that has some special design features and access to support services to enable older people to age in place. It is aimed at older people. The following requirements have to be met:

Facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry or washing machines in living units and a lounge for people to meet.

Design features: A lift if there is more than one storey. Living units must have walk in or low level showers or adapted bathrooms. The living units, the entrance area into the building and communal areas must be suitable for wheelchair users and people with mobility problems. There must be access to support services.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units or part of the building that is covered by this definition, housing associations should state how many units they own or manage that are so covered.

Purpose designed retirement housing with access to support: This is grouped housing that has extra design features and facilities to enable people to age in place. It is aimed at older people. The following requirements have to be met:

Facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry or washing machines in living units and a lounge for people to meet.

Design features: A lift if there is more than one storey. Living units must have walk in or low level or adapted bathrooms. The living units must have kitchens that are suitable for older people who have mobility problems or who are wheelchair users. There must be a bathroom with provision for assisted bathing. The whole scheme including entrances and the buildings that comprise it must be suitable for wheelchair users and for people with mobility problems. There must be access to support.

The definition can only be applied if the whole scheme meets the above requirements.

Most notably, in this definition the term 'sheltered housing' had been replaced by Retirement Housing. The new term retirement housing was an outcome of the CURS research and consultation. The term Retirement Housing had been proposed because it reflects the way in which the private sector relates to housing for older people and so provided a cross sector view at the front line.

The aim of piloting these descriptions was not to consult on them in the conventional sense but rather to ensure that they could be operationalised and measure the impact of the change in approach.

In contrast, the Housing Corporation agreed that the actual term, 'retirement housing' remained open to change as disagreement about its appropriateness in the context of rented housing emerged in all scoping discussions. HAs viewed the term as inextricably linked to private sector, leased housing provision only.

2.1.2. Proposed changes for the 2005: Supported housing

The definitions used in the Pilot RSR are based on the fuller descriptions produced during the CURS research below. They reflect the impact of Supporting People policy and the Housing Corporation's new focus on allocation restrictions (not general needs) and physical attributes of properties. They also reflect the Housing Corporation's policy to encourage housing associations to enable people to make informed choices (where possible) about the types of housing they want to live in and the Housing Corporation's intentions to invest in new housing that enables people to adjust to independent living or enables them to live independently. The explanation below gives more details.

Going out of use in 2005

The existing definition of supported housing was introduced in 1999 and reflected the Housing Corporation's definition of support as set out in the now obsolete Circular R1-11/99. This defined supported housing by services, rather than the physical attributes of properties. The definition was based on a three-pronged test:

1. The RSL must have a landlord/ tenant relationship with the individual receiving support.
2. The level of housing support provided must be over and above that which would generally be provided by an RSL managing general needs housing.
3. The RSL must have formally taken on responsibilities for providing the housing-related support to the resident(s) concerned, either directly or indirectly, through a formal relationship with another organisation or voluntary body.

Only if all three conditions applied was housing deemed to be supported; all other housing was viewed as general needs. In addition, all housing in receipt of additional SHG or SHMG was categorised as supported housing (not all supported housing was eligible for this additional funding).

Since support services are no longer the responsibility of the Housing Corporation, this definition and the categorisations of supported housing currently used in the RSR are no longer relevant because they are based on the nature and delivery of support services to a property.

PROPOSED NEW DEFINITIONS AND DESCRIPTIONS FOR 2005

In line with the Housing Corporation's need to view stock differently, it was proposed that the Housing Corporation would no longer use the term supported housing on its own from 2005. Instead the Housing Corporation would introduce two new terms that more closely reflected the new focus on monitoring buildings and the use of buildings within the HA stock.

The proposed definitions used in the Pilot RSR were based on the fuller descriptions resulting from the CURS research that are shown below. The implication is that HAs would have to determine, using the descriptions and guidance provided to help them, the most accurate definition describing each scheme or building. The definitions and descriptions provided by CURS were:

Purpose designated supported housing: Buildings that do not have any special design features for the client group that is housed but which provides accommodation and access to support services.

Purpose designed supported housing: This would apply to buildings that are specially designed (or remodelled) to encourage independent living or the adjustment to independence for the client group who are housed there. There should also be access to support services. To apply the purpose designed definition, housing associations will be asked to log the existence of special design features in buildings.

At a minimum a building or scheme must have the following:

Facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for occupants or washing machines in flats and a social area/lounge for people to meet

Design features: A lift if there is more than one storey. The living units, the entrance area into the building and communal areas must be suitable for wheelchair users and people with mobility problems.There must be access to support services.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units or part of the building that is covered by this definition, housing associations should state how many units they own or manage that are covered by the definition.

The descriptions of supported housing provided by CURS were open to discussion, because they had not been adopted as Housing Corporation policy at the time of the study.

A number of changes were made to the original CURS descriptions in order to reflect concerns repeatedly raised by HAs during scoping interviews. The two main concerns were:

- A large proportion of housing built with supported housing design features as

specified by the Housing Corporation in the past did not meet the new description of purpose designed, despite being funded and developed for this purpose.

- HAs often use buildings for mixed client groups, with wheelchair user standards incorporated into the ground floor or at least some parts of it but with higher levels being designated to client groups without mobility problems. The absence of a lift in these cases was viewed as irrelevant.

Amendments and clarification, most notably the deletion of the requirement of a lift, reflected operational realities more accurately and ensured that the Housing Corporation would obtain information about the relevant stock that it remained interested in.

2.2. Explanation of a change in terminology: Leasehold schemes for the elderly

In line with the Government and Housing Corporation policies on housing for older people, it was no longer acceptable to refer to older people as 'the elderly'. As a result, a change in terminology was demanded in the case of Leasehold Schemes for the Elderly (LSE).

2.2.1. The changes that were piloted

In the Pilot RSR, the term LSE was replaced by LSOP – Leasehold Schemes for Older People. The definition of LSOP incorporates the change in terminology but otherwise remained the same as in earlier years.

2.3. RSR changes and rent restructuring

While the rent restructuring framework applies to all social housing owned by HAs at 1 April 2002, the Housing Corporation recognised that some HAs might wish to synchronise the start of rent restructuring with the transition to Supporting People on 1 April 2003. As a result, HAs had the option to delay applying the rent restructuring framework to supported housing rents by one year.

The Housing Corporation expected all HAs to begin restructuring the rents of their existing supported housing stock by using the same formula as that for general needs housing (although valuation methodologies could differ); and, to plan to complete restructuring for supported housing by March 2013, giving a full ten years in which to complete restructuring. Service charges for supported housing, like those for general needs housing, are not part of the regime[1].

Collection of additional data on average weekly target rents in the RSR meets the Housing Corporation's commitment to monitor and regulate the movement towards target rents in the HA sector. This data requirement was introduced for general needs stock in the RSR 2002. It will be introduced for supported housing stock in the RSR 2005.

In light of this, the Pilot RSR contained a new Part – Part Ib – that requested information about current and target rents for supported housing (excluding 'care homes providing personal care') by property type and size for each local authority area. It should be noted that the supported housing stock for which target rents were initially requested in the Pilot RSR was that identified by HAs in rent restructuring plans at 1 April 2002, and

[1] Guidance is available in the Housing Corporation's policy document, *Rent influencing regime: Implementing the rent restructuring framework* (October 2001).

not the supported housing stock as redefined in line with the new descriptions.

2.4. Differences between the RSR 2003 and pilot RSR: Implications for 2005 RSR data

Because one of the aims of the research was to measure the potential impact of changes included in the Pilot RSR on the resulting RSR dataset and time-series, the researchers made comparisons between data returned in the Pilot RSR with that returned in 2003 for the corresponding HA. For this reason the Pilot RSR asked for data as at 31 March 2003 although we appreciated that it might not be possible for HAs to provide data on this basis. Where it was possible for HAs to re-work data provided in the 2003 RSR for the Pilot RSR, the differences between the two returns listed below were anticipated. This was important in understanding how the changes might impact on the RSR results and RSR data requirements for HAs.

Summary of Key Changes

- Social/Non-social Housing: there was a possibility that some stock that had received SHMG funding in the past but was otherwise unsubsidised may shift to non-social housing.

- General Needs Housing: the changes suggest that more stock would be categorised as general needs. This was because there would be a body of stock in which tenants had received support services or which had been designated to house certain client groups but which did not meet the design or designation criteria to qualify as retirement or supported housing under the 2005 approach. This would include all units receiving only floating support that were otherwise general needs in terms of design and designation.

- Retirement Housing: a net reduction in retirement versus sheltered housing was anticipated, resulting from the re-categorisation of stock that did not meet the design facilities and features criteria.

- Supported Housing: a net reduction in supported housing was anticipated resulting from the re-categorisation of stock based on the criteria of design facilities, features and designation. Stock only receiving floating support would move to general needs.

- Leased Housing: no net change in data was anticipated as the change in terminology did not affect categorisation of stock.

- Other Activities and Services: The Pilot RSR included an expanded range of service categories to reflect Supporting People and non-Supporting People funded support and care activities. A net increase in these activities was anticipated as a result of the dissociation of services from some stock.

- Revised Supported Housing Client User Group Categories: these were introduced in order to reflect the new categorisations used by Supporting People Commissioners and data collection necessary for Supporting People.

- Supported Housing Rents: more detailed data at national level and a new requirement for current and target rents at local authority level.

- Staff Functions: restructured categories to reflect activities relating to the provision of support separately from housing management and care.

2.5. Summary

- CURS developed a set of descriptions for the Pilot RSR that reflected the

Corporation's new focus on the facilities and design features available in housing intended for older people. In the case of supported housing, the description additionally included designation criteria.

- The descriptions also reflect the range of information that potential tenants need to have available to make informed choices about the housing in which they wish to live.

- The description for retirement housing had been adopted as Housing Corporation policy prior to the study, and could therefore not be changed. No prior decision had been made in relation to the descriptions of supported housing. As a result, for retirement housing only the terminology, not the descriptions, were open to modification. In contrast, the description of supported housing could be changed in response to issues highlighted in the research.

- The overall net impact on the RSR dataset was anticipated to be an increase in the number of general needs units and a reduction in units described as retirement or supported housing.

Chapter three

Changes to sheltered housing definitions

Chapter three presents the findings of the research, based on the Pilot RSR and the accompanying questionnaire, with respect to the change from sheltered housing to the new descriptions of housing for older people.The chapter describes the process by which the new name was agreed; what the Pilot RSR asked for; the HAs' responses; the impact on the data; and implications for the final format of the RSR 2005.

3.1. What the pilot RSR asked for

Because the Housing Corporation only needs to know about a subset of the wider range of specialist stock provided primarily for older people - that stock which contains specified special design features to a minimum standard - the intention was to 'describe' the housing that the RSR is interested in knowing about rather than to 'define' retirement housing. The following 'description' was included in the glossary of the Pilot RSR:

Retirement Housing Properties should be categorised as retirement housing only if they are intended for older people and include some or all of the design features listed below. Whilst it is important that residents at least have access to support, the delivery of or level of support is no longer a defining feature. Therefore, whilst much of the stock that was categorised as 'sheltered' housing in earlier years will fall into the category of retirement housing, some 'sheltered' housing without any special design features will now be categorised as general needs.

Two types of retirement housing are defined below. The principle distinction is the extent of special design features found in the properties designated to only house older people in place for their lifetimes. If housing is not designated for this purpose, it is not retirement housing. The special design features should not be confused with lifetime homes adaptations to general needs properties.

Retirement housing with access to support: Includes remodelled or purpose built grouped housing that has basic facilities and some of the special design features listed below. The property must have access to support services to enable older people to live there for their lifetime. It is aimed at older people only.

Facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry or washing machines in living units and a lounge for people to meet.

Design features: A lift if there is more than one storey; living units must have walk in or low level showers or adapted bathrooms; the living units, the entrance area into the building and communal areas must be suitable for wheelchair users and people with mobility problems; and, there must be access to support services.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units or part of a building that is covered by this definition, you should only include the number of units that you own or manage that are covered by this definition.

Purpose designed retirement housing with access to support: Includes grouped housing that has extra design features and facilities to enable people to live there for the rest of their lifetime. It is only aimed at older people.

All of the following requirements have to be met:

Facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry or washing machines in living units and a lounge for people to meet.

Design features: A lift if there is more than one storey; living units must have walk in or low level showers or adapted bathrooms; the living units must have kitchens that are suitable for older people who have mobility problems or who are wheelchair users; there must be a bathroom with provisions for assisted bathing; the whole scheme including entrances and the buildings that comprise it must be suitable for wheelchair users and for people with mobility problems; and, there must be access to support.

The definition can only be applied if the whole scheme meets the above requirements.

3.2. What the HAs thought

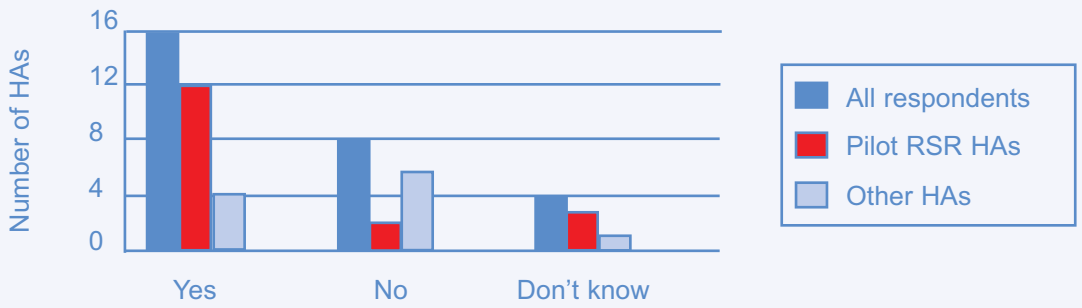
Overall, HAs' responses to the new approach were very mixed. Many of their concerns related to the re-categorisation of stock to general needs that HAs had traditionally viewed as distinct in management terms because of different funding streams and specific development and managerial approaches to this stock. This especially applied to housing designed to meet past requirements no longer relevant in the new descriptions e.g. category 2 sheltered housing that moved to general needs under the new descriptions. Other concerns related to how stock has been included in terms of rent restructuring plans and how local authorities view the stock profiles and therefore the areas of expertise of HAs. The overall response also reflected the tension between the new comprehensive approach to describing the options for housing for older people at the front line as compared to the summarised approach applied for the purposes of data collection in the RSR, data nevertheless, most HAs acknowledged that a new approach to describing sheltered housing was appropriate, however, it should be noted that responses to the very precise questions in the Pilot RSR questionnaire masked some of the overall concerns raised during the research.

Only HAs that own/manage sheltered housing answered questions in the questionnaire about the new approach to sheltered housing. Twenty eight of the thirty seven HAs that returned questionnaires did own or manage sheltered housing at 31 March 2003: 17 of the 25 RSLs that completed the Pilot and 11 of those that did not. As a result, 61% of responses to the questions about retirement housing were based on practical experience.

3.2.1. Is 'retirement housing' the correct term to describe housing for older people from 2005?

Figure 3.1. shows that overall, the reaction to this question was very mixed with a narrow majority of HAs in favour of the new terminology - 57% responded positively. Although in this context the views held are not important to the practical application of the Pilot RSR, it is interesting to note that the majority (71%) of those HAs that actually completed the Pilot RSR considered it to be the correct term. In contrast, the majority (55%) of those HAs that only completed a questionnaire did not agree with this view.

Figure 3.1. Is 'retirement housing' the correct term?



Half of the HAs provided further comments about the acceptability of the term 'retirement housing' and/or suggested alternative terminology. The vast majority directly questioned the suitability of the word 'retirement' in this context. The comments fall into three broad themes:

- The interpretation of the word 'retirement' including problems about the terminology in the context of BME tenant group. For example:

  'It is incorrect to say the term 'retirement housing' replaces the term sheltered as defined. The two represent quite different standards of property. The term retirement housing is already in wide use to describe housing for those who have retired from employment. The use here covers a much more restricted definition and as such may be misleading. Rented social housing is a form of retirement housing but the converse is not true'.

  'Retirement housing' suggests all housing for retired people', 'Not all tenants in sheltered housing are of retirement age', and *'Retirement implies not working and over 60/65'.*

  'We house Asian elders from the age of 50. It may put prospective customers off because it would not be a comfortable term used by Asian people'.

- The need for an age neutral term. For example:

  'This is a difficult one. It is right to change sheltered housing into something else but I feel we should be moving to a more non-ageist approach'.

- Suggestions of alternative terms. For example:

  'Housing for older people' is as acceptable,…', and *'Older persons housing, Older and wiser peoples' housing, Housing for mature persons'.*

Implications: suitability of the term retirement housing

The absence of a significant majority of respondents in favour of the term 'retirement housing' indicated that the term was not necessarily the best descriptor for this type of provision. Negative feedback indicated that the term is interpreted in two ways. First, it was seen as equally ageist as 'housing for older people'. Second, it is intrinsically linked with employment and market driven provision. However, no other term emerged as an alternative from respondents during the research which avoided either a return to 'sheltered' and 'category' terminology, or some equally ageist reference that narrows the potential characteristics of this tenant group.

There was also inconsistency in that the title was 'retirement housing' but the text of the descriptions used the term 'housing for older people'. 'Housing for older people' had, however, been ruled out as an option at the time of piloting because it was perceived to be too specifically linked to age and so may not reflect the broader range of tenants that access this style of housing.

As a result, of these findings further consideration of the term was requested from the Housing Corporation, CURS and members of the Learning Set forum. No alternative term was forthcoming.

The researchers had recommended that the Housing Corporation should consider 'Housing for an ageing population' - the new term for 'housing for older people' that has been adopted by a Europe-wide housing research working group. Whilst this term was considered acceptable as a banner term for the RSR, it was agreed that it was too long to be used for a short form heading throughout.

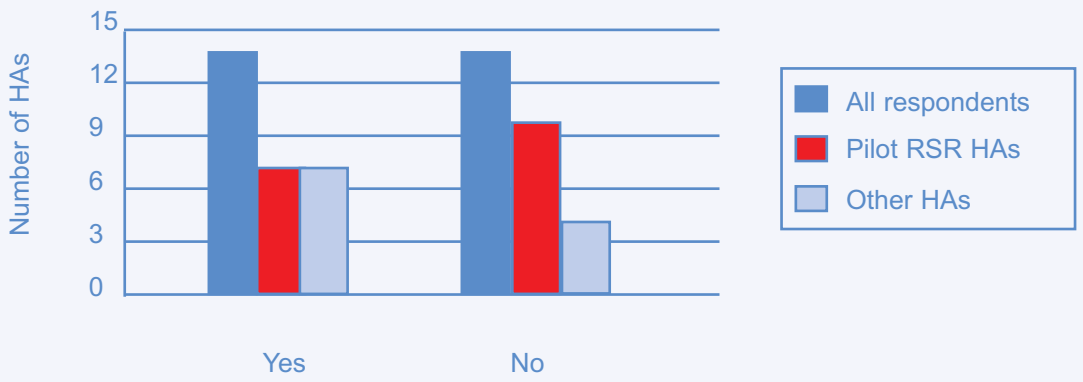
With a remit to change terminology away from sheltered housing and housing for older people, it appeared that 'retirement housing' would have to be adopted as the 'least worst option' available.

On further consideration, however, the Housing Corporation acknowledged the wide range of concerns raised by HAs during the research and agreed that the term 'Housing for Older People' was, after all, the best option. This had the advantage of bringing the RSR's terminology in line with the Corporation's own policy. Importantly, however, as the 'Housing for Older People' policy applies to a broader range of housing than that described in the RSR, some contextualisation was required in the form of a supporting circular or guidance document. Such a circular assisting HAs to categorise their supported housing by exemplification of a wide range of schemes and support services has been vital in supporting accurate reporting in the RSR in the past.

3.2.2. Are the glossary descriptions of ‘retirement housing with access to support’ and 'purpose designed retirement housing with access to support' clear?

The balance of responses indicated that the descriptions provided in the Pilot RSR were not sufficiently clear to deliver accurate data. Overall, the descriptions were considered clear by half of all respondents in the case of 'retirement housing with access to support' and 57% in the case of 'purpose designed retirement housing with access to support' (figures 3.2 and 3.3.).

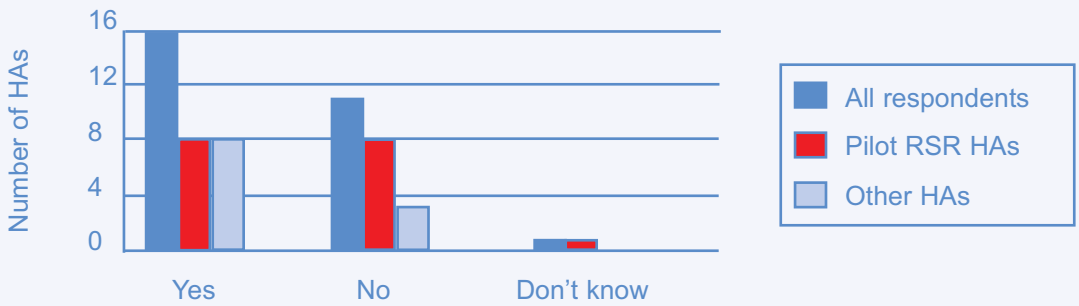
Figure 3.2. Is the description of ‘retirement housing with access to support’ clear?



Importantly, however, the response was the reverse of this from those HAs that had actually applied the descriptions to their stock and completed a Pilot RSR:

- 59% of these HAs considered the description of 'retirement housing with access to support' unclear; and
- 50% of these HAs considered the description of 'purpose designed retirement housing with access to support' unclear.

Figure 3.3. Is the description of 'purpose designated retirement housing with access to support' clear?



The same general issues were raised in relation to both descriptions:

3.2.2.a. Need to broaden the descriptions

To some extent the comments received from respondents in the questionnaire reflect a contradiction within the Pilot RSR description. The glossary descriptions referred to requirements that:

- 'Properties should be categorised as retirement housing ONLY IF INTENDED FOR OLDER PEOPLE....'
- 'The principle distinction is the extent of special design features found in the properties DESIGNATED ONLY TO HOUSE OLDER PEOPLE in place for the rest of their lifetimes. If housing is NOT DESIGNATED, it is not retirement housing....'
- 'Retirement Housing with Access to Support: ..... It is ONLY AIMED AT OLDER PEOPLE.'

Use of the words 'designated' and 'only' had the effect of restricting the descriptions to a specific client group – older people. HAs had assumed that only housing designated for or occupied by people over 55 should be categorised as retirement housing. As noted by the HAs, older people were not defined in the descriptions:

> *'No definition is made of 'older people' is this anyone over 55?'*, and '*Definition of 'older person' is this age related and how do you deal with retired due to ill health?'*.

The spirit of the Housing Corporation's approach to retirement housing is much wider than this and acknowledges that the age of the client group is not the defining feature. The resulting narrow approach was at odds with the words, 'intended for' and 'aimed at',

which had the potential to widen the implied restriction on the client group.

In fact, the CURS definitions for retirement housing in Towards a Common Currency for Defining Older People's Housing and Services (pages 18-20) do not include the words 'only' or 'designated'. These words featured in the Pilot descriptions as a direct result of discussions with the Housing Corporation and scoping of the draft descriptions with HAs prior to finalising the Pilot RSR.

Implications for the RSR 2005

When the words 'only' and 'designated' were deleted from the descriptions, the result was that the words 'intended for' and 'aimed at' became more important and an actual definition of 'older people' became less important in this context. This approach more accurately reflected the fact that the Housing Corporation are interested in knowing about 'housing aimed at older people' rather than housing only for older people.

In line with this it was agreed that the words 'only' and 'designated' should be deleted and more emphasis should be placed on the fact that age is not a pre-requisite for letting. The descriptions were amended accordingly.

3.2.2.b. The need to clarify the concept of 'access to support'

HAs were troubled about the lack of a definition of 'access to support', for example:

> *'There is no definition of what is considered to be 'access to support'. All UK property has access to support eg. via social services etc. Provision of a warden service, alarm service etc, as such any property intended for older people would qualify for this?'.*

It is true that all HA tenants now effectively have access to support under Supporting People regardless of the unit type that they occupy.

Related to this and of note, is the fact that HAs specifically queried whether Community Alarms, resident managers and warden services should be interpreted as support services where provided. This was likely to be in response to the fact that 'access to support services' is actually listed under design features in each description. It should be noted that the list of relevant 'housing related services for older people' in *Towards a Common Currency* (page 19) includes Community Alarm schemes. Nevertheless, following further consultation with the Housing Corporation, none of these services/ features were considered to be relevant defining features of access to support or retirement housing in the context of the property based descriptions in the RSR.

The project group agreed that the key line in the descriptions was, *'The property must have access to support services to enable older people to live there for their lifetime.'*. This line needed to be clarified in relation to the fact that the Housing Corporation are not interested in the technicalities of how people are enabled to age in place, just the fact that this intention is reflected in the facilities and services available to tenants.

3.2.2.c. Need to clarify the nature of the individual facilities and design features listed

A number of respondents found specific elements of the descriptions open to interpretation. The main examples were:

Washing machines:

> *'Are washing machines to be provided as part of the tenancy? Will a plumbing point suffice?'.*

It was necessary to clarify if a property would only meet this requirement if the landlord actually provided a washing machine in the absence of a laundry or if plumbing points for washing machines were sufficient?

- There must be a laundry specifically for residents or at least plumbing points for washing machines in living units.

Meaning of an adapted bathroom:

> *'What is an 'adapted bathroom' – this could be [anything from] a handrail to a hoist!'.*

It was necessary to clarify what extent of adaptation was needed to meet the design feature of 'adapted bathrooms'.

- Bathrooms with walk in showers or that meet wheelchair standards meet the criteria for adapted bathrooms.

Wheelchair user standard:

> *'Is this a different standard to wheelchair user standards? If not why not say wheelchair user standards.'* and *'Clearer definitions of 'suitable for mobility problems or wheelchair users'.*

It was necessary to clarify if the term 'suitable for people with mobility problems and wheelchair users' meant the same thing as wheelchair user standard, terminology already used in the RSR.

- Living units should meet wheelchair user standards.

3.2.2.d. Need for clearer formatting

In order to make the descriptions more user friendly, a number of changes to the format were suggested. For example:

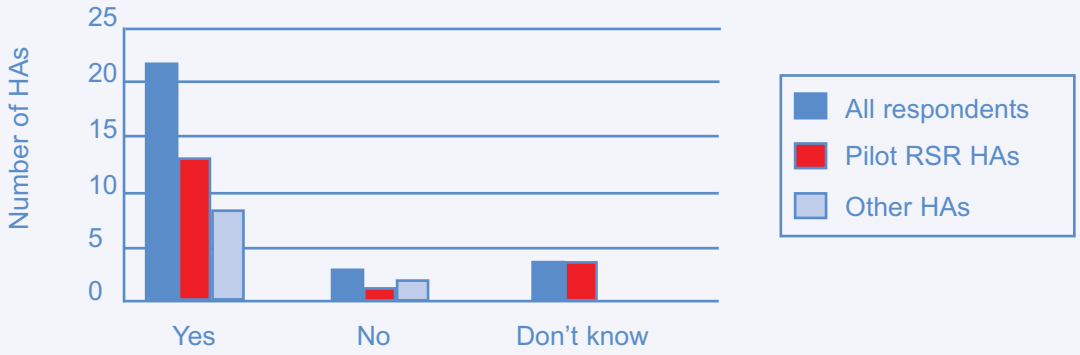
> *'The description could be more concise, perhaps with the use of bullet points. More emphasis should be put on how it differs from 'Purpose designed retirement housing'*; *'It maybe helpful to highlight the word 'some' of the special design features'*; and, *'It maybe helpful to highlight the word 'all' in the sentence, 'All of the following requirements have to be met'*.

These suggestions have been incorporated into the final descriptions.

3.2.3. Is it possible to incorporate the new categorisations into internal information systems to allow accurate reporting in the 2005 RSR?

A clear majority of responding HAs (79%) did not anticipate problems incorporating new descriptions into internal information systems for reporting in 2005 (figure 3.4.). In the case of HAs that had completed the Pilot RSR this was with the general proviso that the final descriptions are clarified and relate clearly to property based information.

Figure 3.4. Is it possible to incorporate the new categorisations into internal information systems?



The key implications for HAs related to the need to adapt the information held on these properties:

- The need to adapt databases and recording methods to include property based information for aids and adaptations.

- Reliance on officer scheme knowledge about this stock and its design features.

One HA noted that:

> *'The proposed definition means that older persons services falls into 3 categories from which flow – lettings – rents/service charges, etc. which will be difficult to track in our internal systems and which will mitigate against our focus on service delivery'.*

It should be noted that where HAs did not complete a Pilot RSR but did complete a questionnaire, this was largely because they did not have the capacity to survey their stock in terms of its facilities and design features but they did want to participate in the research. This underlines the importance of ensuring that HAs have sufficient notice of the new descriptions that will be used in 2005 so that they can ensure that their stock is properly categorised in advance.

3.2.4. Did the new descriptions result in the re-categorisation of owned housing reported as sheltered in the RSR 2003 to general needs in the pilot RSR?

The response to this question was very mixed. Results from the quantitative analysis measures the net effect in the case of HAs that actually completed the Pilot RSR more accurately.

Impact of changes on the RSR data: Pilot RSR and RSR 2003 data compared

Seventeen of the 24 HAs that returned Pilot RSR data included in their quantitative analysis owned sheltered housing units. Together these 24 HAs owned just under 5% of the total sheltered housing stock owned by HAs at 31 March 2003 - 10,437 units.

Change in the total owned stock

At 31 March 2003, sheltered housing had accounted for just over 7% of all stock owned by the Pilot RSR HAs. Using the new descriptions in the Pilot RSR, the relative importance of retirement housing changed in 12 of the 17 HAs. Overall there was a net

loss of 1,823 units, a decrease of just under 17% compared with the number of sheltered housing units reported as owned in the RSR 2003. As a result, in the Pilot RSR, retirement housing accounted for just over 6% of the total stock owned.

Eight of the 17 HAs had above average percentages of sheltered housing within their owned stock of social housing at 31 March 2003. Amongst these HAs, there was a net loss of 784 units, a slightly higher decrease of just over 18% of units.

Table 3.1. shows that differences in stock numbers between the RSR 2003 and Pilot RSR returns also varied by HA size as well as stock profile. Large HAs showed the greatest average loss in the number of units categorised as retirement. They also show the largest shift of this stock to general needs.

Table 3.1. Differences in stock numbers between the RSR 2003 and pilot RSR returns by HA size

	No. of HAs	Owned sheltered Vs retirement units			Managed sheltered Vs retirement units		
		Diff (n)	Average difference (n)	% change	Diff (n)	Average difference (n)	% change
V Large	4	-92	-23	-2%	0	0	0
Large	9	-1540	-171	-31.7%	0	0	0
Medium	8	-191	-24	-14.5%	16	2	133%
Small	3	0	0	0	0	0	0
All pilot RSR HAs	**24**	**-1823**	**-76**	**-16.8%**	**16**	**0.7**	**3.5%**

Size = number of social housing units owned: small 0-250; medium 251-2,500; large 2,501-10,000; very large over 10,000.

It should be noted that despite the net decrease in retirement housing units, there was an increase in the number of units for older people with support needs in the break down of supported housing stock by client group in the Pilot RSR than the RSR 2003. This result is discussed in Chapter four.

3.2.5. Is it possible to apply the new descriptions to housing that is managed on behalf of others for the purposes of reporting accurately in the RSR 2005?

For those HAs that did manage stock on behalf of others, 57% did not anticipate problems applying the descriptions to stock that is not owned but is managed by them. Only four HAs stated that this would not be possible, two of which had not completed a Pilot RSR.

Total stock managed on behalf of others: Pilot RSR and RSR 2003 data compared
Table 3.1. shows that overall there was a net gain of 16 units in the figures for Pilot RSR, an increase of 3.5% compared with the number of sheltered units in the RSR 2003.

3.3. Summary and implications for the RSR 2005

- Because decisions had already been made as to the new descriptions of sheltered housing the objective of the research was to ensure these descriptions meet the

Housing Corporation's objectives as effectively as possible.

- Considerable concern was displayed about the choice of the term 'retirement housing.' As a result, despite initial reluctance, the Housing Corporation agreed that 'Housing for older people' was a better replacement for sheltered housing. Contextualisation of the RSR approach is still required as the Housing Corporation's policy applies to a wider range of housing options for this client group than is included in the RSR descriptions. In particular, age is not a pre-requisite to access this housing.

- Both because of the narrower definition of the stock categorised as 'housing for older people' in the context of the RSR and general concerns raised during the research, a circular exemplifying the application of the RSR descriptions is required to ensure accurate reporting.

- Clarification of the descriptions is also required to ensure accurate reporting. It is essential that the descriptions are clear because of their reliance on property based information. As it will be necessary to survey stock on this basis, it is also essential that the descriptions are communicated to HAs sufficiently in advance of the RSR 2005 to enable them to re-categorise stock on internal information systems.

- Analysis of data provided by HAs indicates a potential decrease of 17-18% in the number of units recorded in RSR data in 2005 as compared to 2004. As a result, housing for older people will be less important in the overall profile of HA housing.

Chapter four

Changes to supported housing definitions

Chapter four presents the findings of the research, based on the Pilot RSR and the accompanying questionnaire, that relate specifically to the changes made to the description of supported housing. The chapter covers what the Pilot RSR asked for; HAs' responses; the impact on the data; and implications for the final format of changes to the RSR in 2005.N.B. The research was undertaken using the term 'retirement housing' with respect to the 'sheltered housing' definition. The agreed change to 'housing for older people' took place as a result of the findings of the research. In this chapter, which reports on the research, retirement housing is used where appropriate.

4.1. What the pilot RSR asked for

The Housing Corporation's data requirements with respect to supported housing are to identify properties that are specifically designated for clients requiring support to live independently and properties that incorporate the special design features that some tenants require to encourage independent living or adjustment to independent living. The following description, amended in line with issues raised during scoping discussions (see Chapter two), was included in the glossary of the Pilot RSR:

SUPPORTED HOUSING

The term 'supported housing' applies to purpose designated or designed housing with support. The delivery of support under the Supporting People framework does not result in the categorisation of housing as supported if there is no special designation on access to or relevant design features incorporated into the property. In the absence of these factors, housing is general needs.

The required designation and design features are listed below and distinguish the two categories of supported housing that the Housing Corporation is interested in. It is likely to be housing where residents will attract Supporting People Grant although this is not a defining requirement.

Purpose designated supported housing: Includes buildings with some or no special design features but which provide accommodation for a specific client group that can access support services.

Purpose designed supported housing: Includes buildings that are specially designed or remodelled to encourage independent living or the adjustment to independence for client groups that require specific design features. There should also be access to support services. At a minimum a building or scheme must have the following:

Facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for

occupants or washing machines in living areas and a social area/lounge for people to meet in.

Design features: The entrance area into the building, communal areas and at least some of the living units must be suitable for wheelchair users and people with mobility problems; and there must be access to support services.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units or part of the building that is covered by this definition, you should only record the actual number of units owned or managed that are covered by this definition.

4.2. What the HAs thought

As in the case of retirement housing, HAs raised a number of general concerns about how the new descriptions impacted on the overall profile of their stock. They are not necessarily reflected in answers to the specific questions provided in the questionnaire that are discussed below. Notably, they were concerned about the impact of the re-categorisation of stock on their rent restructuring plans and on the perception of local authorities and the regulator with respect to the range of housing activities that they undertake.

Only HAs that own/manage supported housing answered questions about changes specifically relating to supported housing. Thirty of the 37 HAs that returned questionnaires did so at 31 March 2003: 19 of the 25 HAs that completed the Pilot and 11 of those that did not. As a result, 67% of responses to the questions discussed below about supported housing are based on practical application of the form.

4.2.1. Are the descriptions of 'purpose designated supported housing' and 'purpose designed supported housing' clear?

Responses to the descriptions were largely the same for both categories (figures 4.1 and 4.2). Overall 64% of the HAs that responded considered the description of 'purpose designated supported housing' as clear and 61% considered the description of 'purpose designed supported housing' as clear. Perhaps, more importantly, in both cases the vast majority of those that actually completed the Pilot RSR (73%) held this view.

Figure 4.1. Is the description of 'purpose designated supported housing' clear?

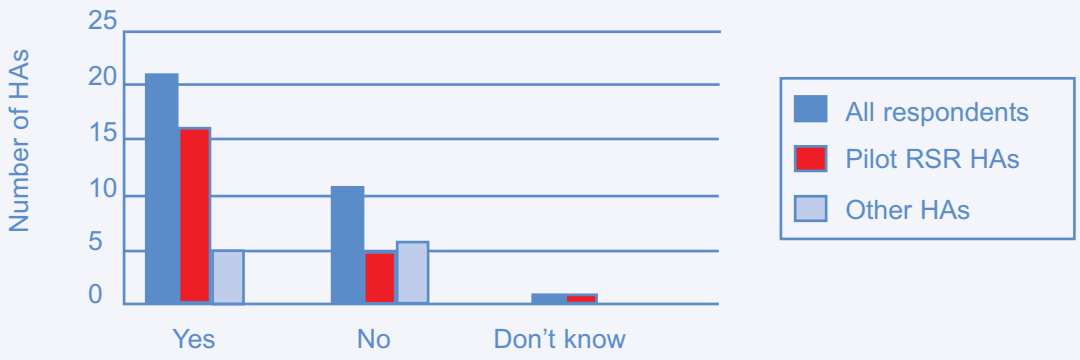
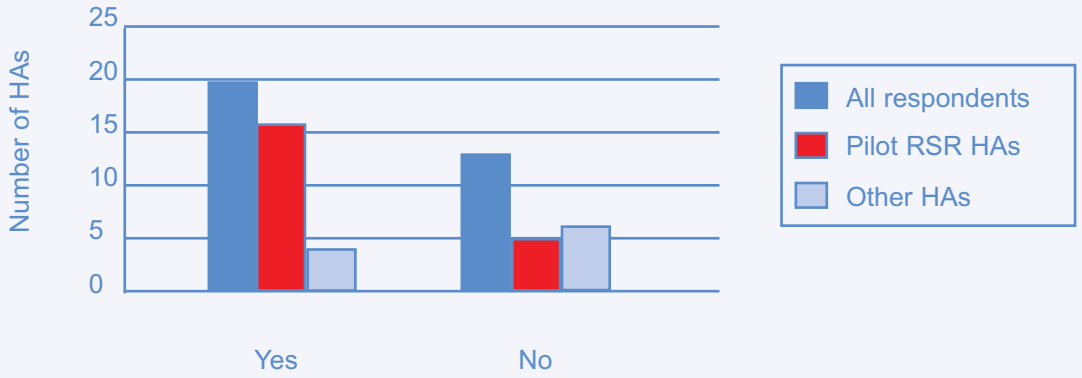


Figure 4.2. **Is the description of 'purpose designed supported housing' clear?**



The specific comments made by HAs highlighted five main issues:

- The two terms are too similar, for example:

  'The terminologies are far too similar. It would be less confusing to call them 'designated supported housing' and 'purpose built supported housing'; '*The words designated and designed are so close as to become indistinguishable*'; and *'The two terms 'designed' and 'designated' are too similar. It would be helpful to use very different descriptions'*.

- Some retirement housing can also be categorised as supported housing, for example:

  'If supported housing is purpose designated housing with support then all retirement housing with support is supported housing'; and *'There is no longer reference to personal care or to registered housing and therefore retirement housing could fall into the definition of supported housing and vice versa'.*

- The meaning of 'designated for specific client groups' and the need for exemplification, for example:

  'Define the 'specific client groups'. I could not find what you meant by this any where in the Guidance Note'; and *'It maybe helpful to include some examples of what this could be'.*

- Clarification on the need for design features AND facilities, for example:

  'Not clear whether to be 'designed' a unit/scheme needed to have 'facilities' and 'design features' or whether if a unit had 'facilities' but no 'design features' it would still be 'designed supported housing'. Do you need all the design features or just one?'; 'Unclear whether units to be included should have both facilities and design features to be included'; and *'Design features – does this mean that one property could have two design supported units and the rest of the property is classed as general needs?'*

- Clarification of 'access to support', 'wheelchair standards' and the 'provision of washing machines', for example:

  'Need greater clarity as to what access to support services means. Our working assumption for completing the pilot RSR is to interpret this as widely as

possible'; 'What is support? Is it design features or something else?'; 'Washing machines in living areas. Supporting people - assume that this is both landlord and private provision of support. Explanation of what is included in 'supported'; and *'Are all self-contained units excluded? Is suitable for 'wheelchair users' the same as wheelchair standards' in the RSR?'*

4.2.1.a. The terminology of purpose designated and purpose designed supported housing

It was clear that the words, 'purpose designated' and 'purpose designed', were too similar. To encourage accuracy the descriptors needed to be more distinct.

Feedback from consultation with the Housing Corporation indicated that acceptable alternative terms would be, 'purpose built' and 'purpose designated'. However, in subsequent testing with HAs, the term 'purpose built' raised further issues. HAs did not interpret this to include stock adapted to include the required design features. It is the 'design' features that are key and not the 'purpose'.

In light of this the researchers recommended that the appropriate terms should be:

- Designated supported housing.
- Purpose designed supported housing.

These were agreed by the Housing Corporation.

4.2.1.b. Inclusion of retirement housing as designated supported housing

Both the comments made by HAs and the quantitative analysis of those data returned in completed Pilot RSRs (see below) highlighted the fact that on the basis of the approach piloted, there was some leakage of retirement housing into supported housing data. When the Pilot RSR descriptions had been drafted this was with the knowledge that some units previously categorised as sheltered or supported would be re-categorised as general needs. Movement between the categories of retirement and supported housing had not however been anticipated.

The fact that in most of the rest of the RSR, detailed data about retirement housing and supported housing continued to be requested as a single body of stock (rather than as two distinct activity areas) did not support the need for these two activity areas to be mutually exclusive upfront in the return. However, the Housing Corporation were reluctant to increase the size of the RSR which would be the case if all data were collected separately for the two areas of activity.

Further, the inclusion of 'older people with support needs' alongside all other Supporting People client group types in the breakdown of housing by client group requested in the return was misleading. As a supported housing client group, it is no surprise that stock for older people with support was classified as designated supported housing.

What is more, the very fact that facilities and features that needed to be present for units to fall into the definition of 'purpose designed retirement housing' were higher than those for 'purpose designed supported housing' appeared to indicate that this could also be a form of supported housing.

Discussions with the Housing Corporation clarified the fact that they expected the categorisation of retirement housing and supported housing units to be mutually exclusive to reflect the two distinct policy areas.

In order to make this clearer, a number of changes to the approach were required:

- A third category of retirement housing was introduced into the breakdown of stock by activity type: **Designated supported housing for older people**. This is housing that may not include all or any of the design features of housing for older people but which provides accommodation specifically designated for older people requiring support and that actually has support services in place, regardless of whether these are provided by the HA or another organisation.

- In the breakdown of retirement and supported housing by client group, all housing categorised as retirement housing was to be included as 'housing for older people with support needs' regardless of which category of retirement housing or whether support was actually in place or not.

4.2.1.c. The meaning of designated for specific client groups and the need for exemplification: Supporting circular/guidance

In the past the RSR approach to defining supported housing has been underpinned by exemplification of the application of the definition to a wide range of housing activities, client groups and services. This has enabled a clearer understanding of the distinction between general needs, sheltered and supported housing and has also enabled more consistent and accurate reporting without the need to extend the RSR Guidance Notes to inappropriate lengths. No such circular had existed since the introduction of Supporting People and so the Pilot RSR approach to supported housing was not contextualised within the Housing Corporation's overall approach.

All of our recommendations are unpinned by an overarching recommendation that any changes are exemplified in more detail in a guidance document in the same way that categorisation of supported housing was previously exemplified. The Housing Corporation should make a clear effort to disseminate understanding of their approach to all aspects of supported housing post implementation of Supporting People.

4.2.1.d. Clarification on the need for design features and facilities

Discussions confirmed that to be categorised as 'purpose designed supported housing', all of the listed facilities and design features needed to be incorporated into a unit. A scheme could, however, include only some units that met all of the requirements of 'purpose designed supported housing' and so would need to be split into the appropriate categories. These points should be highlighted in the RSR 2005 description.

4.2.1.e. Clarification of the glossary descriptions of supported housing

Analysis of feedback indicates that HAs raised a range of issues in relation to the two categories of supported housing that were the same as those raised in relation to Retirement Housing. Notably, the need to clarify the concept of access to support and the nature of support services; and, clarification on the provision of washing machines and mobility standards. In case there had been differences within the definitions of the two types of housing, these issues were raised with CURS and the Housing Corporation and clarified in the RSR 2005 descriptions.

The concept of 'access to support':
Because 'access to support' was not defined, HAs had issues with the term as a defining feature and it was interpreted subjectively. In the case of retirement housing the intention was to clarify this in the context of any support/services that enable people to age in place, in line with the purpose of this type of housing. The purpose of supported housing

is different and what 'access to support services' in supported housing means, needed to be considered separately - and if necessary distinguished from the potential to access support that all tenants have under Supporting People.

- It was agreed that the actual presence of support as opposed to access to support should be intrinsic to supported housing.

Washing machines:
It was not clear if this would only be a defining feature if the landlord provided the washing machines in the absence of a laundry or if plumbing points for washing machines were sufficient.

- It was agreed that washing machines must be provided by HAs in supported housing if there is no laundry for tenants.

'Suitable for people with mobility problems and wheelchair users':
It was not clear if this was intended to mean the same as 'wheelchair user standard' or a different measure.

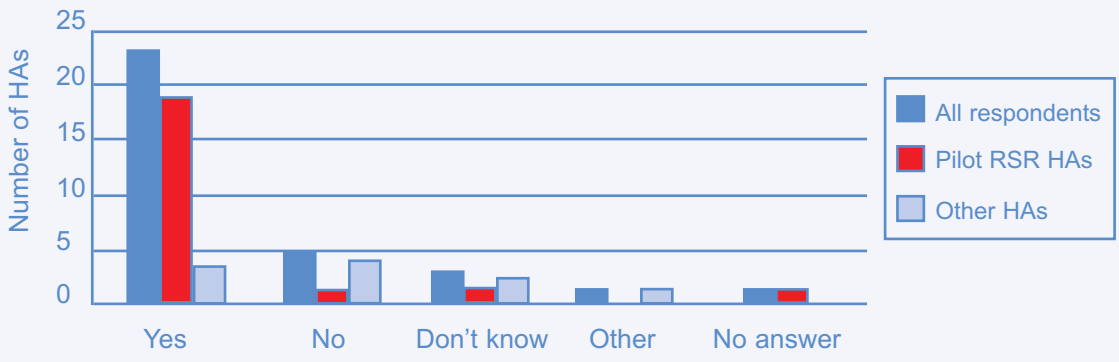
- It was agreed that this means designed to wheelchair user standards, and no less.

It should be noted that although clarification has been incorporated into the descriptions, further exemplification in a separate circular or guidance document would help clarify which design features meet the description.

4.2.2. Is it possible to incorporate these new categorisations into internal information systems to allow accurate reporting in the RSR 2005?

As with sheltered housing, the vast majority (70%) of responding HAs did not anticipate any difficulties in incorporating the new descriptions into reporting systems (figure 4.3.).

Figure 4.3. Is it possible to incorporate the new categorisations into internal information systems?



Notably, amongst those HAs that actually did complete the Pilot RSR, 86% responded positively compared with only 36% of those who only completed the questionnaire. Responses from those HAs that did not complete a Pilot RSR are nevertheless relevant because they reflect the reasons why HAs could not practically participate in the survey. This is reflected in the following comments:

> *'We currently don't hold this sort of information (design features etc) in any sort of systematic way. We need to conduct, therefore, an information gathering*

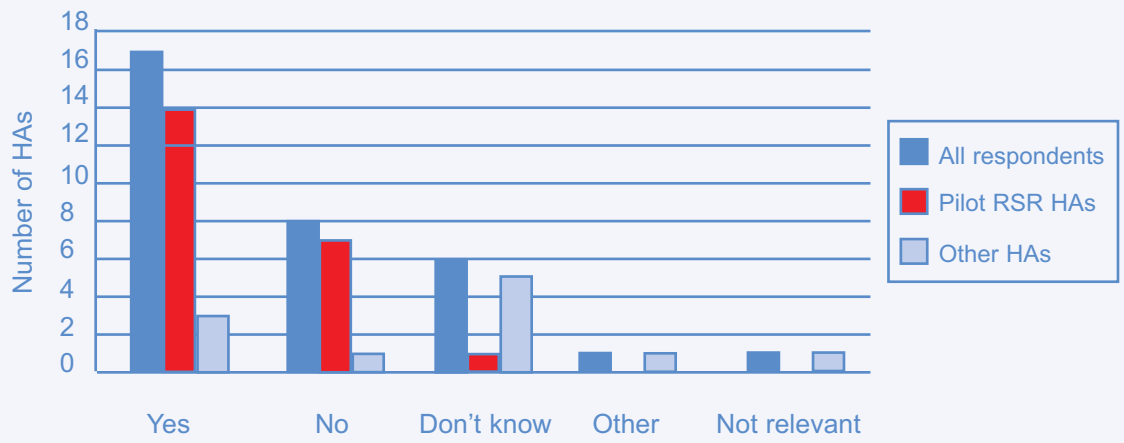
exercise'; and *'Because definitions are unclear, imprecise and not mutually exclusive, data systems will require major work at considerable cost to be able to hold and analyse this data'.*

The comments also highlighted the need for the descriptions to be clearer and disseminated within sufficient time to allow HAs to survey stock and incorporate property based information into their reporting systems for the purposes of RSR reporting in 2005.

4.2.3. Did the new descriptions result in the re-categorisation of housing reported as supported in the RSR 2003 to general needs housing in the Pilot RSR?

On the basis of the questionnaire, just over half of all respondents (52%) stated that a shift to general needs would result from application of the new descriptions. This percentage was higher amongst HAs that had completed a Pilot - just under two-thirds reported a shift in stock (figure 4.4.). As would be expected, almost half (45%) of the HAs that had not completed a Pilot RSR did not know if this would in fact be a result. Qualitatively, HAs largely confirmed the re-categorisation of floating support to general needs.

Figure 4.4. Did the new descriptions result in reclassification of supported housing as general needs?



The quantitative analysis gives a more accurate picture of the shift in supported housing stock to general needs for HAs completing the Pilot RSR.

Impact on the RSR data: RSR 2003 and pilot RSR data compared

All 24 HAs that completed a Pilot RSR and were included in the analysis had reported owning supported housing stock in the 2003 RSR. Together these HAs owned just over 15% of the total supported housing stock owned by all HAs at 31 March 2003 - 15,019 units. They also owned 17% of the total number of units receiving floating support that were reported in the 2003 RSR - 1,025 units. It should be noted that floating support was a subset of total supported housing in the RSR 2003, but became a subset of general needs units in the Pilot RSR.

Change in the total owned stock

Overall, there was a net loss of 2,915 supported housing units in the Pilot RSR, a decrease of 18% compared with the RSR 2003. There had been re-categorisation between social and non-social housing and between retirement and supported housing

categories under the new descriptions.

In the Pilot RSR one HA had reclassified 197 of its supported housing units (care homes providing personal care) to 'other non-social housing' rather than supported social housing. In contrast, one HA had re-categorised 54 units from non-social housing to supported social housing units. The net result of these movements was almost a 3% increase in the number of non-social housing units owned by HAs in the Pilot RSR compared with the 2003 RSR. This demonstrates the fact that shifts in stock resulting from reclassification under the new descriptions were not purely within social housing and towards general needs.

Eighteen of the respondents owned an above average percentage of supported housing (more than 6.8% of owned stock) within their stock profile at 31 March 2003. These HAs showed a slightly lower than average net loss of supported housing in the Pilot RSR, a decrease of just over 16% compared with the RSR 2003.

Table 4.1. shows how changes in supported housing stock numbers between the RSR 2003 and Pilot RSR varied by HA size. The average change per HA was higher than for retirement housing. In the case of supported housing it was very large and medium HAs that had above average losses of supported housing units.

Table 4.1. Differences in stock numbers between the RSR 2003 and pilot RSR returns by HA size

	No. of HAs	Supported housing units owned RSR 2003 Vs pilot RSR			Supported housing units managed RSR 2003 Vs pilot RSR		
		Diff (n)	Average difference (n)	% change	Diff (n)	Average difference (n)	% change
V Large	4	-1624	-406	-25.5%	0	-	-
Large	9	-644	-72	-9.9%	-27	-3	-1.4%
Medium	8	-605	-76	-21.3%	-122	-14	-11.9%
Small	3	-42	-14	-9.3%	-328	-109	-163.3%
All pilot RSR HAs	**24**	**-2915**	**-121**	**-18%**	**-467**	**-19**	**-9.5%**

Size = number of social housing units owned: small 0-250; medium 251-2,500; large 2,501-10,000; very large over 10,000.

FLOATING SUPPORT

Within the sub-category of floating support (supported housing in the RSR 2003 but general needs in the Pilot RSR), there was a loss of 1,439 units. The implication is that the re-categorisation of floating support units accounted for almost half (49%) of the overall net loss in supported housing units. Reporting on floating support units in the Pilot RSR was apparently more accurate than in the RSR 2003 - this accuracy resulted in a loss of a small number of units that had previously been counted incorrectly as a result of confusion of how bedspaces are defined.

It should be noted that not all floating support units were transferred from supported to general needs housing categories. Of the 1,784 floating support units reported as supported housing in the RSR 2003, only 1,439 were reported as general needs in the

Pilot RSR.

It became clear in comments made by HAs that because of the way that Supporting People is funded and can lever in support to a unit independently of the landlord, it is no longer possible for HAs accurately to identify the number of units in its stock which are occupied by tenants receiving floating support services. HAs are no longer party to all support services being delivered to tenants in their homes. This makes reporting on floating support difficult and the implication is that data will be incomplete and therefore inaccurate and potentially misleading. This had major implications for the approach to data collection about floating support.

The Housing Corporation were concerned that this area of activity should not be omitted from the picture of sector-wide activity. As an alternative source of data, accounts information was reviewed but it was not possible to identify the scale and value of floating support to an HA's activities via accounts information either. Therefore, the Corporation asked if it would be possible to collect data from HAs about the floating support that they provide to their own tenants in the RSR.

Such data would not reflect the true scale of floating support services provided by HAs and could be misleading if interpreted and used incorrectly. There is a real danger that these figures would be interpreted as, or used to show, 'the number of units to which HAs provide floating support'. This may be a big understatement of the true scale of floating support activity undertaken by or delivered within the sector, particularly for some individual HAs that provide floating support to non-tenants. There is also no method of collecting this information for non-social housing. The Housing Corporation recognised the potential partial nature of these data.

The scale of floating support services provided by HAs can be identified in Supporting People data collected in the Supporting People Client Reference Form and managed by the Joint Centre for Social Housing Research on behalf of the ODPM. The Housing Corporation has free access to this rich data source. Therefore, we strongly recommended that the Housing Corporation collaborates with the Joint Centre/ODPM (or the NHF, who also receive these data) to obtain the required information about floating support. As a result, no data should be requested about floating support in the RSR from 2005.

SUPPORTED HOUSING BY CLIENT USER GROUP

In the Pilot RSR, HAs were also required to provide a breakdown of their supported housing by client user group using the new Supporting People client groups.

Seventeen of the 24 HAs completing the Pilot RSR actually provided a breakdown of their newly categorised supported housing by client group. Only the total number of units owned was consistently completed by all of them (the RSR also requests a breakdown of stock in direct management and stock managed on behalf of others). However, it should be noted that one very large HA merely extracted units that were no longer categorised as supported housing units, they did not attempt to re-categorise their remaining supported housing units into the new Supporting People client groups used in the Pilot RSR. This HA owned 1,712 supported housing units.

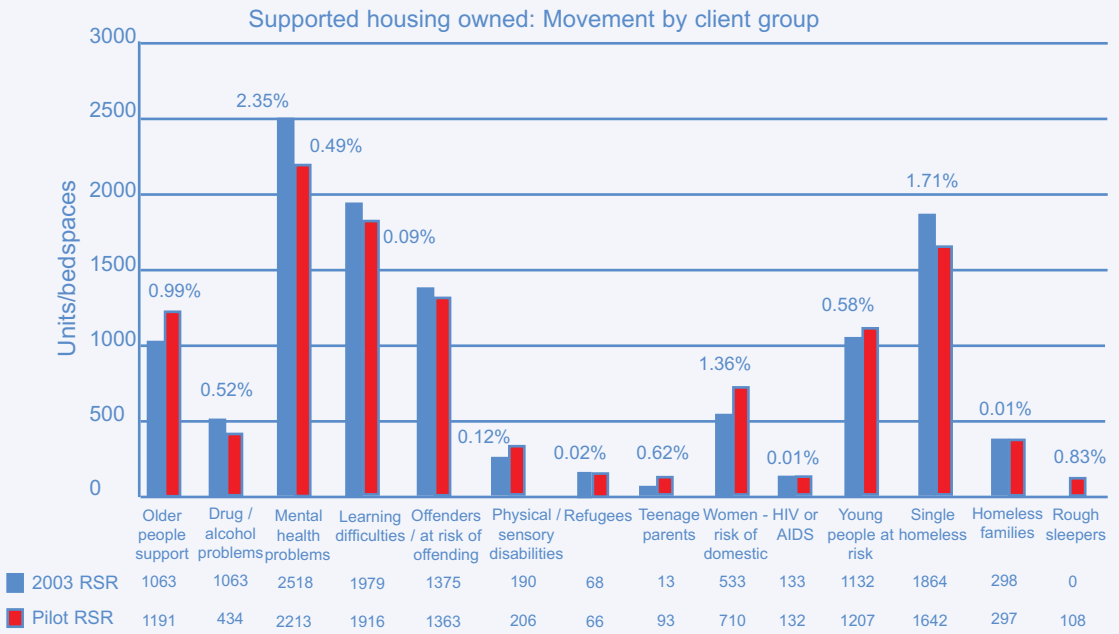
Figures 4.5. and 4.6. show movements between client groups. These movements are the result of two main factors:

· Re-categorisation of stock, taking it out of supported housing and into general needs.

· A change to Supporting People as opposed to HC client groupings (figure 4.6.

exemplifies the effect of this on redistribution).

Figure 4.5. Supported housing units owned categorised by client user groups: RSR 2003 and pilot RSR compared



In six client user groups there was a net gain in the number of units: older people with support needs (resulting from the re-categorisation of stock from sheltered housing to supported housing in the two RSRs); physical/sensory disabilities; teenage parents; women at risk of domestic violence; young people at risk or leaving care; and, rough sleepers.

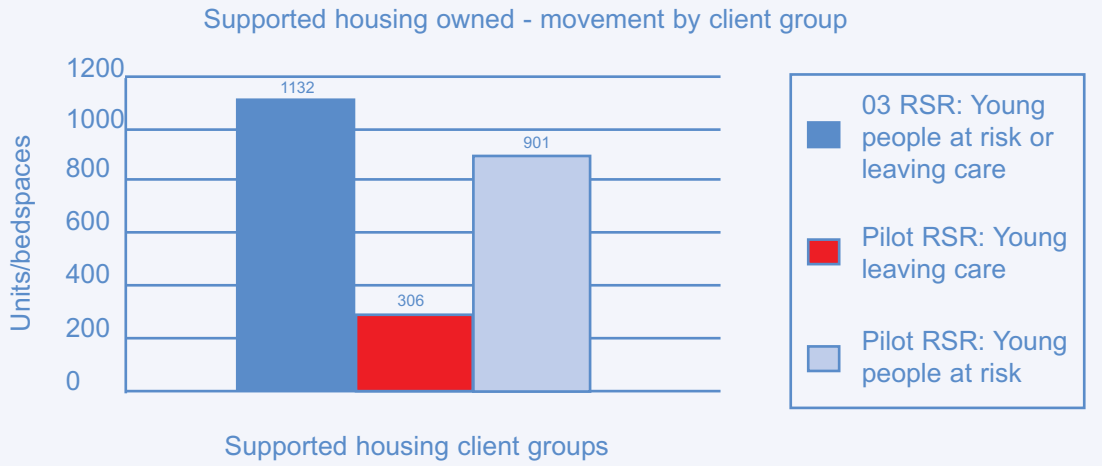
The main movements of stock between client groups, as opposed to straightforward reductions in stock numbers resulting from the reduction in supported housing units were:

- Rough sleepers, a new category that included households previously categorised as single homeless people.

- Young people leaving care and young people at risk, previously combined in one client group but split in the Pilot RSR (see figure 4.6.). The Pilot RSR client group also included some young people categorised as single homeless people in the 2003 RSR.

- Vulnerable women with children were lost from the breakdown because they were required to be combined with ‘women at risk of domestic violence’ in the Pilot RSR.

Figure 4.6. **2003 supported housing client group 'young people at risk or leaving care' split amongst the revised client groups, 'young people leaving care' and 'young peopl at risk'**



4.2.4. Was it possible to apply the new descriptions to housing that is managed on behalf of others for the purposes of reporting accurately in the RSR 2005?

Overall, 65% of the HAs that did manage supported stock on behalf of others were positive that they would be able to apply the definitions to the stock that they manage but do not own. This percentage increased to 83% when only those HAs that completed the Pilot RSR are considered.

Total stock managed on behalf of others: Pilot RSR and RSR 2003 data compared Table 4.1. shows that overall there was a net loss of 467 supported housing units managed by HAs on behalf of others, a decrease of 10% when compared with the RSR 2003. The vast majority - 451 of these units - were categorised as floating support in the RSR 2003. In contrast to patterns of reclassification relating to owned stock, above average changes in managed stock resulting from reclassification occurred amongst small and medium sized HAs.

4.3. Summary

- The description of supported housing included in the Pilot RSR incorporated a number of changes in comparison to the initial description of supported housing provided by CURS. Further clarification of the descriptions proved necessary to ensure accurate reporting in the RSR 2005.

- The most significant point of clarification was to ensure that when stock is broken down by activity type up-front in the RSR, the two categories - of housing for older people and supported housing - are mutually exclusive.

- Analysis of the Pilot RSR highlighted that stock designated for older people with support in place (as opposed to access to support) had been included incorrectly as designated supported housing in the Pilot RSR. In order to ensure that this is not the case in the 2005 RSR dataset, an additional category of housing for older people is warranted - Designated Supported Housing for Older People.

- The terms 'purpose designated' and 'purpose designed' supported housing were considered too similar and needed to be more clearly distinguished. This could be

achieved by changing the terminology to 'designated' and 'purpose designed' supported housing in the 2005 RSR.

- Analysis of data returned in the Pilot RSR indicated that the new approach resulted in a potential net decrease of 16-18% in owned supported housing units between 2004 and 2005. Around half of this loss resulted from the re-categorisation of units receiving floating support to general needs housing.

- The way in which floating support is now funded under Supporting People means that it is no longer possible for HAs to provide accurate data about floating support to tenants in the sector. As a result, data on HAs' involvement in floating support and the number of HA tenants receiving floating support should be sourced from Supporting People Client Record data from 2005 and not from the RSR.

- The re-categorisation of supported housing was not simply to general needs within social housing. Some supported housing had been re-categorised as non-social housing and vice versa.

Chapter five

Other issues impacting on the RSR 2005

The Housing Corporation's changing approach to supported housing under Supporting People and modifications in the terminology used to describe housing primarily provided for older people impact on other areas of the RSR.

This chapter presents findings on the principle areas affected: the impact on rent levels and target rent requirements with respect to supported housing rents data; leasehold schemes for the elderly; and staff.

As in all RSR research, HAs also made wider comments about the RSR and its guidance notes of value to the constant effort to simplify and clarify the RSR. These issues are also discussed in this chapter.

5.1. Rent levels

Prior to this research, the RSR had only asked for the level of weekly rents and service charges for the total owned stock of supported housing for each HA. In the Pilot RSR, HAs were asked to provide much more detailed information about rents for the first time:

- Average weekly rents and service charges for all owned stock by property type and size.
- Average weekly rents and service charges by property type, size and by local authority area.
- Average weekly target rents by property type and size by local authority area.

All of the 33 responding HAs with supported housing in ownership/management completed the Long RSR in March 2003. As a result, all were asked to provide this more detailed information about their supported housing rents.

5.1.1. Average rents and service charges: RSR 2003 and pilot RSR data compared

The first step in the analysis of general needs and supported housing rents was a comparison between the overall average rents provided in the RSR 2003 and those provided in the Pilot RSR (the only level of comparison data available). This would provide an indication of what impact the re-categorisation of stock in line with the new descriptions of housing for older people and supported housing would have on the time-series of RSR general needs and supported housing rents data.

General needs

It was possible that the re-categorisation of housing for older people and supported housing to general needs housing could have an upward impact on general needs rent

levels. It was important to measure any impact in light of the prominence of general needs rent levels within current housing policy and regulation.

Not all Pilot RSR respondents provided data for rents. Of those that did, in only one case was there a significant increase in the general needs average rent figure in the Pilot RSR. The average rent for this HA increased by more than £10 per week.

Similarly, in only two cases was there a notable difference in the 'average service charge eligible for housing benefit'. The first was a shift from £6.67 in the 2003 RSR to £11.08 in the Pilot and the second was a shift from £13.89 in 2003 to £33.19 in the Pilot.

SUPPORTED HOUSING

Table 5.1. shows the changes in supported housing rents for responding HAs. There was much more variation in average supported housing rents and service charges between the two RSRs than was the case for general needs. Changes were most notable in the cases of HA4, HA7 and HA11.

Table 5.1. Supported housing rents: Pilot RSR and 2003 RSR compared

	Total stock		Avg weekly rent		Stock with HB - eligible serv chgs		Avg weekly HB - eligible serv chgs		Stock with chgs eligible for supp people		Avg weekly serv chgs eligible for HB supp people		Stock with chgs NOT eligible for supp people		Avg weekly serv chgs NOT eligible for HB supp people	
HAs	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	2003 RSR
HA 1	404	404	£46.13	£46.13	371	371	£17.06	£17.06	224	224	£109.82	£109.82	169	169	£9.88	£9.88
HA 2	307	302	£57.81	£53.18	307	302	£20.21	£19.34	307	302	£98.46	£90.33	162	161	£5.58	£11.37
HA 3	246	301	£59.61	£60.49	246	225	£12.83	£9.55	232	295	£70.74	£70.62	214	145	£7.37	£7.35
HA 4	71	282	£38.53	£52.37	22	114	£32.79	£106.66	27	85	£161.19	£141.47	32	2	£5.14	£2.82
HA 5	587	1388	£59.77	£63.29	491	1151	£16.72	£17.58	0	1120	£0.00	£99.63	319	916	£4.92	£5.24
HA 6	210	260	£57.47	£56.20	210	260	£20.96	£18.73	157	189	£86.32	£77.15	124	126	£4.91	£4.74
HA7	96	214	£55.80	£55.94	68	0	£32.51	£0.00	47	75	£17.21	£32.92	54	0	£3.91	£0.00
HA 8	1367	1517	£57.88	£56.04	1249	1380	£25.68	£26.12	1001	761	£137.90	£144.96	995	578	£8.39	£8.81
HA 9	2548	2548	£58.39	£61.46	2370	2373	£23.90	£23.89	2323	2326	£125.75	£125.65	2279	2282	£7.89	£7.89
HA 10	543	754	£41.68	£43.98	513	650	£33.46	£27.35	473	681	£361.69	£282.14	353	514	£8.65	£7.08
HA 11	555	1238	£75.56	£55.40	506	954	£51.04	£37.51	507	1060	£177.11	£121.40	472	766	£14.75	£11.10
Total for HAs	**6,934**	**9,208**	**£57.51**	**£57.07**	**6,353**	**7,780**	**£25.65**	**£25.43**	**5,298**	**7,118**	**£147.41**	**£131.61**	**5,173**	**5,659**	**£8.32**	**£7.99**

For the first time in the RSR, stock occupied by tenants receiving support could be included as general needs under the new approach. An additional column requesting Supporting People charges had been included for supported housing rents in the Pilot RSR but not for general needs. However, in order to ensure that Supporting People charges would be recorded consistently by all HAs in the case of general needs charges, it was necessary to consider if it would be appropriate to add an additional column to collect data on Supporting People charges for general needs as well. Alternatively, they could be included in 'service charges ineligible for housing benefit' or they could be omitted altogether. At the very least this issue required guidance.

Following consultation, the Housing Corporation decided that it did not want to know

about Support Charges per se as it would not use these data and so could not justify collecting them. The additional column had been included in the case of supported housing rents because there had been concerns that the charge might not be recorded consistently.

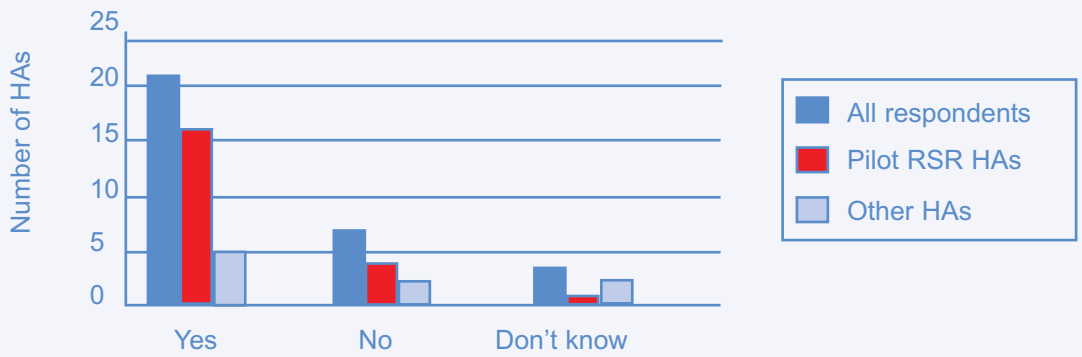
It was agreed that HAs should be instructed in the Guidance Notes to exclude Supporting People charges for general needs and supported housing properties.

5.1.2. Supported housing rents by property type, size and LA area

As noted above, HAs were asked to provide supported housing rents and service charges data by property type and size by local authority area for the first time in the Pilot RSR.

Two thirds of the 33 HAs said that it was possible to provide rents by property type and size by local authority area for supported housing from existing internal reporting systems (figure 5.1.). The percentage of those that completed the Pilot RSR was higher at 77%.

Figure 5.1. Is it possible to provide supported housing rents by property type, size and LA area?

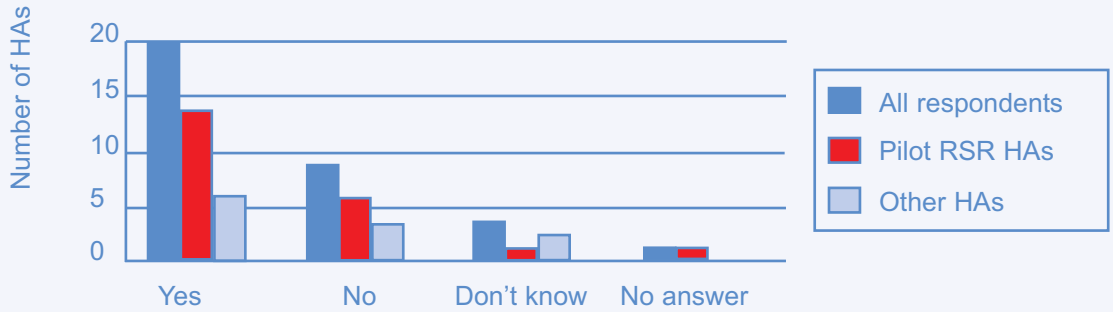


The 11 HAs that answered that it was not possible or that they did not know if it was possible to extract these data from internal systems were asked to indicate whether incorporating this data requirement would be easy or difficult. Only one HA said that this would be easy and they had completed a Pilot RSR. Overall, half stated that this would be a difficult exercise.

5.1.3. Supported housing target rents by property type, size and LA area

In 2005, HAs that complete the Long RSR will be required to provide target rents by LA area in addition to current rents. We asked HAs if it is possible to extract supported housing target rents from internal reporting systems.

Figure 5.2. Is it possible to provide supported housing target rents?



Overall, 61% of the HAs said that they are able to provide these data from current information systems. HAs that had completed a Pilot RSR were more likely to respond positively - 64% compared with 55% of HAs that did not complete respectively. Only nine HAs said that this was not currently possible, but most of them had completed a Pilot RSR.

The 12 HAs that answered that it was not possible or that they did not know if it was possible to extract these data from internal systems were asked to indicate whether incorporating this data requirement would be easy or difficult. Only a quarter thought this would be easy. Half thought that this would be a difficult task. Two thirds of this group had completed the Pilot RSR.

5.1.4 Guidance on how supported target rents data should be provided

If supported housing target rents data are to be of any value to the monitoring of rent restructuring across the social housing stock as a whole, these data must be consistent and meaningful. Full guidance was provided with the Pilot RSR on how these data should be calculated in line with the ODPM's formula and the Housing Corporation's policy on rent restructuring.

Overall, only 58% of HAs thought the Pilot RSR guidance was clear. The percentage of HAs that actually completed a Pilot RSR that responded positively was lowered, 55%. In contrast, those that did not complete a Pilot RSR were more likely to find the guidance clear (64%).

A number of issues requiring clarification in the guidance to supported target rents were raised:

- It is not clear whether to include staff units in target rent figures. In fact, staff units should not be included (as is the case with general needs).

- The guidance takes no account of the fact that some supported housing properties are exempt from rent restructuring. In fact the RSR only requests data for those units with a target rent.

- The fact that target rents were requested from 2002/03 even though rent restructuring could be delayed until 2003/04 caused confusion and concern. The fact that restructuring of supported housing rents may have been implemented a year later by some HAs and the implications of this for reporting on a consistent basis should be clarified in the guidance in a user friendly way if target rents data are collected. This is

especially important as the first year of reporting will be 2005, quite far into the rent restructuring timetable for both groups of HAs.

Following consultation on this point with the Housing Corporation it became clear that they expected target rents to be calculated as of 2002, regardless of when the actual movement towards target rents commenced, i.e. 2002 or 2003. For the purposes of reporting in the RSR, the 2002 target rent is then only increased by the guideline RPI figure each year, the RSR is not interested in any other aspects of the approach to rent restructuring. As a result, the Housing Corporation expects all HAs to be able to report target rents as if year one was 2002, regardless of their individual plan or timetable. This ensures consistency of reporting across all HAs. A detailed example of how this figure should be derived needs to be incorporated into the guidance on target rents for the RSR 2005.

- HAs understood that they would have to recalculate target rents specifically for the RSR because they had used depreciated cost replacement valuations for supported housing. The fact that valuations used for supported housing may be on either basis needs to be clarified in the guidance for the RSR 2005.

5.2. Leasehold schemes for older people (LSOP)

In line with a policy move away from the term 'elderly', respondents that owned LSE units at 31 March 2003 were asked if they thought that ' Leasehold Schemes for Older People' was the correct term to use to describe LSE housing in the future. This was a simple change in terminology and no change in the number of units was intended or expected.

Of the 35 respondents, 15 owned LSE units at 31 March (43%) and provided us with their views:

- Ten RSLs answered Yes, it is correct the term (two thirds).
- Two RSLs answered No.
- Two RSLs answered Don't Know.
- One RSL provided another answer: *'Seems the politically correct term'*.

HAs were asked to state what terminology they would suggest if they did not consider LSOP to be correct.

Of those that answered No, the following comments were made:

> *'Do not see any difference in the terms elderly or older. Here we refer as lease hold for over 55s. LSOP makes me remember when we referred to older age group as OAPs';* and *'Leasehold retirement housing - as one rapidly approaching retirement age, I do not want to be continually reminded that I am 'older' and would suggest our older residents would not appreciate this either'.*

Of those that answered Don't know, the following comments were made:

> *'Retired leasehold schemes'*; and *'Many schemes are for people aged 60+ and these would not consider themselves to be 'older'.*

Although the overall response was positive to this specific question, only a small number of HAs had been consulted and they were organisations that provide a significant proportion of their rental units for older people or people with support needs. It is likely that the response would have been different if a wider cross section of HAs had been consulted.

Despite the positive response, in the wider context of issues raised about continuing ageism with reference to 'older people' discussed in Chapter three, the title warrants further consideration. In particular 55 years of age is and will not be considered 'old' by the vast majority of people, particularly those over 55.

Two HAs, both with a mixed profile of stock suggested that the term would more appropriately be, 'Retirement leasehold schemes' or 'Leasehold retirement housing'. These terms initially appeared more suitable in the context of the overall new approach. The term 'retirement' housing with respect to rental units was not favoured by respondents in part because 'retirement housing' was viewed as a market housing option (LSE/retirement villages) rather than as social provision for those that cannot meet their own needs via the market (sheltered housing). This response to the term 'retirement' during the research, suggested that it might be appropriate in relation to LSE housing. In retrospect, the researchers felt that this should have been an option included in the consultation.

As a result, the researchers recommended that the term LSE be replaced by Leasehold Retirement Housing (LRH) as a more appropriate alternative to LSE than Leasehold Schemes for Older People which, in retrospect seemed a somewhat outdated approach to describing this housing option.

However, following further discussion about this terminology, the Housing Corporation decided that any new terminology should reflect that applied to rental housing. The term, 'housing for older people' was adopted over retirement housing in the context of rental stock, and so they felt that the same approach should be applied to leasehold housing. Therefore, the Housing Corporation decided to adopt the term, Leasehold Housing for Older People (LHOP) to reflect their wider policy on housing options for this client group.

5.3. FTE paid staff by employment function

To reflect the introduction of Supporting People and the Corporation's changing approach to support, an additional category of employment function was added to the breakdown of FTE paid staff in the Pilot RSR: ‘Staff providing support’. The order of the categories was also slightly changed and these changes were overlooked by several HAs. Clear errors resulting from this were corrected in the quantitative analysis of the Pilot RSRs.

Interestingly, there was a net reduction in the total number of FTE staff reported in the Pilot - strictly speaking it should have been directly comparable to the RSR 2003 total.

Of the 15 returns with validated data, only four HAs had no changes. Table 5.2. shows that the main shift between categories was as expected, from staff providing care to staff providing support.

- Three HAs moved 424.04 paid staff from ‘Staff providing care’ to ‘Staff providing support’, representing 19% of the ‘Staff providing care’.

- One HA moved 45.94 paid staff from ‘Staff providing care’ to ‘Staff providing other services’ representing 2% of ‘Staff providing care’.

- Three HAs moved 47.84 paid staff from ‘Staff engaged in managing or maintaining housing stock’ to ‘Staff providing support’, representing 5% of ‘Staff managing or maintaining housing stock’.

- Two HAs moved 168.7 paid staff from ‘Staff providing other services’ to ‘Staff providing support’ representing 1% of ‘Staff providing other services’.

Table 5.2. FTE paid staff by employment function: RSR 2003 Vs pilot RSR

Client group	2003 RSR	Pilot RSR	Diff %
Staff engaged in managing or maintaining housing stock	946.16	863.52	-8.73%
Staff engaged in developing or selling housing stock	113.34	112.34	-0.88%
Staff providing central administrative services	608.53	599.53	-1.48%
Staff providing care	2205.12	1554.14	-29.52%
Staff providing support		556.57	N/A
Staff providing other housing services	168.7	203.64	20.71%
Staff providing other services (not housing or care services)	49.57		N/A
Staff providing other services (not housing,support or care services)		20.88	N/A
Total full-time equivalent paid staff	4091.42	3910.62	-4.42%

It should however, be noted that a number of HAs stated that more detailed descriptions of the employment functions for staff are needed, particularly in light of the new classifications. It is therefore important that Housing Corporation officers review the guidance and expand descriptions of functions where relevant.

5.4. Other aspects of the pilot RSR

HAs were asked if there were any instructions or definitions that had not already been addressed that required further clarification. The vast majority of HAs that responded to the question either raised issues about the descriptions and terminology relating to retirement and supported housing or reiterated earlier comments provided. These have been discussed in Chapters three and four. What was notable was those HAs that had completed the Pilot RSR were less likely to require further clarification than those that did not complete the Pilot, thus highlighting the value of experience with the practical application of the changes to the return.

HAs were also asked to indicate if there was any terminology used within the Pilot RSR or Guidance that they considered could be open to misinterpretation. The response to this question reflected the first: responses were largely related to the new descriptions and were largely made by HAs that had not completed a Pilot RSR.

HAs were also asked if they anticipated being able to utilise the data provided in the Pilot RSR, i.e. that would be requested in the RSR 2005, internally. Overall, half of the responding HAs thought that they would utilise these data. Notably, HAs that had completed the Pilot RSR were less likely to envisage utilising these data than those that did not complete the RSR.

A range of issues were raised that did warrant further consideration in the drafting of the RSR 2005. They are summarised below:

5.4.1. Care homes

As an omission in the drafting of the Pilot RSR, the glossary definition of Care Homes remained the same as in the 2003 RSR and so was still linked to the old definitions of supported and social housing. The Housing Corporation agreed that reference to the definition of supported housing within the definitions of Care Homes should be deleted because it is no longer relevant to their approach to reporting on supported housing.

5.4.2. Determining property type

Providing a breakdown of supported housing rents by property type and size in Part H in the Pilot RSR proved problematic in some cases because the HAs were unclear about how to categorise/split bedspaces, bedsits and one bedroom flats.

This distinction is important in ensuring that the accurate numbers of units (self-contained units and shared housing bedspaces combined) owned and managed by HAs are reported throughout the whole return.

Amendments to the 2003 figures resulting from a rereading of the Guidance Notes showed that this distinction is not currently always being made correctly. Further guidance on how to distinguish between non-self-contained units (shared housing bedspaces) and self contained units and how these should be recorded in relation to property type and size is required.

5.4.3. Clarifying ownership and management

One HA stated that it was not clear how they should report units owned by them but leased to another organisation on a lease of 20 years or less.

This is unlikely to be a significant problem in light of the fact that only one HA raised it as an issue. Existing guidance clearly states that stock leased to another body on a lease of less than 21 years original term should be included as owned.

5.4.4. Distinction between assured and secure tenancies

More detailed definitions of the terms 'assured' and 'secure' rents were requested. Currently there are no definitions that distinguish tenancy types in the guidance notes. This should be rectified as it cannot be assumed that the HA officer completing the return understands the difference in tenancy types.

5.4.5. Issue for the electronic RSR design

Where a HA answers Yes to an overall question but has very little data to enter, it is frustrating for them to have to enter zeros in all other fields before they can submit the return electronically.

Plans to pre-populate the RSR should avoid this in the future and is an example of how features in the electronic RSR can reduce the perceived burden of the RSR exercise for HAs.

5.5. Summary

· While the re-categorisation of stock under the new approach resulted in changes in

average rent levels and service charges, these changes were not significant in the majority of cases. In any comparative analysis of rent levels between 2004 and 2005 RSR data, the results will need to be evaluated against details of relevant stock in order to ensure that the findings are meaningful.

- The majority of HAs could provide more detailed information about supported housing rents from existing information systems - by property type and size and by local authority area. As these data are already available in the majority of cases, the findings indicate that the burden of providing this additional information is minimal for the majority of HAs.

- On the other hand, the findings indicate that providing supported housing target rents data are likely to be less straightforward for many HAs. It is therefore important that the Housing Corporation reviews the value of these data. Similarly, clearer guidance should be provided to ensure data needs are transparent with respect to target rents especially with respect to the data.

- In line with the Housing Corporation's adoption of 'Housing for Older People' as the new terminology to replace sheltered housing, Leasehold Schemes for the Elderly will be known as 'Leasehold Housing for Older People' from 2005.

- Feedback from HAs indicated that a range of areas of the Guidance Notes would require clarification in order to ensure accurate and consistent reporting in the RSR 2005.

Chapter six

General findings from the research

Chapter six identifies a range of findings from the research, which support the recommendations in Chapter seven.

This RSR research project differed from those that went before it. The aim was not to develop new definitions of sheltered and retirement housing in collaboration with HAs, but instead, to apply definitions that had already been developed and to test how these worked in the context of the RSR and its resulting dataset. There was only one aspect of the new approach open to consultation in the traditional sense of the term - HAs were asked if the term 'retirement housing' was the correct term and if not, what the best alternative term would be.

This chapter summarises the general findings of the research and the implications for the RSR.

6.1. Housing for older people

In response to identified problems with the details of sheltered housing the Housing Corporation made a policy commitment to create a framework that would provide better descriptions of the housing options available to older people. CURS was commissioned to undertake a programme of research that delivered this framework after extensive consultation and testing with HAs and community organisations. The approach did not, however, fit easily into the RSR approach to data collection. The RSR has traditionally aimed to categorise the HA stock into a small number of housing activities that reflect regulatory and policy areas of interest on which data collection and reporting is based.

As in the existing approach in the RSR, the Housing Corporation's aim was to identify those properties that are primarily intended for older people and have a range of basic facilities over and above general needs accommodation in its broadest sense. However, their new data needs are more specifically focused on the physical attributes of properties; those that have some or all of an identified list of design features. Access to support must be available but not necessarily in place. Whilst the Housing Corporation acknowledge that HAs are providing a much wider range of specialist stock, the RSR is only interested in this subset - that stock containing the specified special design facilities and features to a minimum standard. For the purposes of the research, this stock was divided into two categories; retirement housing with access to support, and purpose designed retirement housing with access to support. The remainder of stock primarily intended for older people was viewed as belonging to the general needs stock.

The categorisations were intended only for the purposes of the data collection exercise in the RSR. It was instantly clear, however, that the Housing Corporation would have to demonstrate that the use of these categorisations to identify this subset of stock did not make the wider range of housing options for older people invalid in any way given their policy and funding functions. Indeed, it is important to the Housing Corporation that HAs continue to deliver the wider range of housing options to older people and others that

may require adapted housing.

A number of aspects of the descriptions used required clarification as a result of feedback from HAs during the piloting of the new approach. Most importantly, however, the descriptions required contextualisation. In particular, HAs need to understand that they are 'descriptions' for the purposes of data collection in the RSR in order to alleviate their concerns about the impact of re-categorising housing on their funding streams and on other policy areas such as rent restructuring. These issues also underpinned some of the concerns raised by those HAs that refused to participate in the Pilot RSR. It is therefore important that the Housing Corporation issues some guidance on how the approach to data collection fits into their overall policy approach to housing for older people.

With clarification, few HAs anticipated significant difficulties in incorporating the new categorisations into their information management systems. Therefore, accurate reporting should be possible in the RSR 2005.

The term 'Retirement Housing' as a replacement for sheltered housing remained unpopular throughout the research although no agreed alternative term was forthcoming. In particular, the term was viewed as market driven and not appropriate to the social sector. 'Housing for an Ageing Population' has been adopted more widely by the international research community but proved difficult to apply to the RSR's narrow view of this housing in terms of the subset approach to data collection. The result is that the Housing Corporation opted to adopt 'Housing for Older People' as the new terminology to reflect its wider policy.

Pilot results indicated that the change will result in an estimated net reduction of around 16 to 18% of housing formerly reported as sheltered housing. Whilst the majority of units lost from this category of housing had been recategorised as general needs housing, it should be noted that some housing had been recategorised under the new supported housing category of 'designated supported housing'. This was because the housing was designated for a specific supported housing client group and was receiving support but may not meet the design requirements in the new categorisation.

To reflect the two distinct policy areas, the Housing Corporation wishes to keep the categorisation of housing for older people and supported housing mutually exclusive in the RSR view of HA activity. Consequently, it was necessary to introduce a third category of housing for older people to make this more transparent: 'Designated Supported Housing for Older People'.

6.2. Supported housing

The new descriptions of supported housing that were piloted in the research were also based on the CURS framework, designed to identify suitable housing for clients and workers at the front line. However, because the CURS descriptions were not tied into the Housing Corporation's supported housing policy to the extent that those for housing for older people, there was some scope to make changes to enable the resulting data to match the Housing Corporation's needs most effectively.

Under Supporting People, the Housing Corporation has no longer a direct interest in defining supported housing by the level or nature of support services being provided to tenants. Instead, it needs to identify properties that are either specifically designated for tenants requiring support to live independently or those that incorporate special design features to encourage independent living or the adjustment to independent living. Two supported housing categories were used in the research, ‘purpose designated supported housing’ and ‘purpose designed supported housing’.

Again, it immediately became clear during the research that HAs' assumptions about the categorisation of their housing were largely linked to the funding streams under which that housing had been developed. There was significant resistance to excluding housing developed with supported housing funding but which did not meet the design requirements specified in the description from the new purpose designed supported housing category. It will therefore be important to contextualise the RSR descriptions of supported housing, by clarifying the Housing Corporation's policy and providing examples of the categorisation for a range of schemes in order to support the RSR approach and ensure accurate reporting.

One concern raised by HAs was the similarity of the terms Purpose Designed and Purpose Designated, and the implications for inaccurate reporting as a result. To resolve this, the terms were changed to 'Purpose Designed' and 'Designated' supported housing. Also, the descriptions required clarification on a number of issues before HAs thought that they could accurately re-categorise their stock. With clarification the general consensus was that the new approach could be incorporated into information systems to enable accurate reporting in the RSR 2005.

The net effect of the new categorisations is estimated to be a reduction of between 16 to 18% of supported units from the RSR dataset. The movements of stock between categories in the RSR were a little more complicated in the case of supported housing as compared to housing for older people. Some housing previously categorised as supported sheltered housing became designated supported housing. This was not the intention - so the reduction of units is likely to be greater in the RSR 2005. Also, while some housing previously categorised as non-social specialised housing became social supported housing, some housing previously categorised as social supported housing became non-social housing.

The biggest shift was of units with floating support from supported housing to general needs. Under the Supporting People policy, HAs may no longer be aware of support being provided to tenants. For this and other reasons, it became obvious during the research that as it is no longer appropriate to collect data on floating support via the RSR. Instead, the JCSHR should provide data on tenants receiving floating support and HAs' activities with respect to floating support from the Supporting People Client Record database.

6.3. The re-categorisation of stock: Implications for target rents data in the RSR

Since the introduction of the rent restructuring regime in 2002, the RSR has collected target rents data on general needs properties. From 2005, the intention is to introduce the same reporting requirement for supported housing target rents. Each year Dataspring at the Centre for Housing and Planning Research produces an analysis of how actual rents are moving towards target rents from these data, published annually by the Housing Corporation in a Sector Study and the Guide to Local Rents. There are concerns that the recatgorisation of stock in the RSR is at odds with the information used for rent restructuring at the start of the process. However, as rent restructuring applies to the social housing stock as a whole, the opportunity to take this comprehensive approach is preferable to the partial information currently employed. It should be noted that in which these data in any one year will provide a picture of the difference between actual and target rents, the picture of convergence over time may be affected by the change in approach. However, the information provided by HAs suggested that this effect would be small.

6.4. Leasehold schemes for the elderly: New terminology

In light of the changes in terminology for rented housing, HAs were asked if Leasehold

Schemes for Older People would be a suitable replacement for the term Leasehold Schemes for the Elderly. Even though HAs did not react negatively overall to this suggestion, in retrospect it was not an effective departure from ageist terminology. Instead the terms 'retirement leasehold'/'leasehold retirement' housing emerged as more appropriate. This was because 'retirement housing' is viewed as a market housing option rather than social provision.

However, in line with the Housing Corporation's decision to adopt consistent terminology across the full range of housing options in the RSR, it was decided to apply the term, 'Leasehold Housing for Older People' to stock previously described as LSE.

SUMMARY

- The research differed from earlier work in that the definitions had already been tested in other contexts and there was already general agreement about the definitions to use.

- The terminology was however, still unclear from the point of view of HAs. Changes were agreed to ‘Housing for Older People’, to ‘Purpose Designed’ and ‘Designated’ Supported Housing. To ensure categories were mutually exclusive the category Designated Supported Housing for Older People was introduced within Housing for Older People.

- Pilot results indicated that there would be a reduction of 16-18% of units formerly returned as sheltered housing and a similar proportionate reduction in units formerly returned as supported housing.

- The change in definition has implications for target rents data and leasehold schemes for the elderly – now to be designated Leasehold Housing for Older People.

Chapter seven

Recommendations for the RSR 2005

Chapter seven sets out the recommendations made to the Housing Corporation by the Cambridge Centre of Housing and Planning Research based on the research findings from the Pilot RSR research.

Many of the recommendations impact on changes to the RSR, which will be implemented in 2005.

The overall objective of the Pilot RSR exercise was to operationalise and test the appropriateness and implications of a new approach to describing sheltered and supported housing in an RSR context. The research has allowed initial recommendations to develop in the context with on going discussions with both HAs and the Housing Corporation, to ensure that they are meaningful and appropriate and both proportional to the regulator's need for information and the operational realities of HAs.

It is important to note that the main recommendations will impact fundamentally on the nature of the data set that HAs are asked to provide. This has implications for HAs as the providers of data in terms of the level of resources required to meet data needs in 2005. It also has implications for the Housing Corporation and other users of the RSR data such as the ODPM, local authorities and others particularly with respect to RSR time-series and other linked datasets.

It should also be noted that it was extremely difficult to find HAs prepared to take part in the research and particularly to fill in the Pilot RSR form. This reflects the extent of investment necessary to be able to complete the forms accurately. Similarly significant proportions of those who actually agreed to take part in the research found it difficult to provide the required information. Ensuring accurate descriptions of stock is, of course, a one-off cost but the extent of the problem underlines the need to ensure that the definition used will not be subject to further change.

Based on the findings discussed in this report, a final set of recommendations for the RSR in 2005 is set out below.

7.1. Recommendations relating to housing for older people

Recommendation one: From sheltered housing to 'housing for older people'
The term sheltered housing will no longer be used in the RSR from 2005. It will be replaced by the term 'housing for older people'. In the RSR context this housing will be that incorporating a specified set of design features and facilities or that with special support in place. As such, 'housing for older people' in an RSR context will refer to a subset of the full range of housing options primarily provided for older people by HAs (the remainder being general needs and leasehold housing in the RSR).

Recommendation two: Descriptions of 'housing for older people'
Rental stock will be required to be reported in one of three separate categories of

'housing for older people' or as general needs. The three categories will be contextualised by a preamble in the glossary. The final recommended text of the revised descriptions for use in the glossary of the RSR 2005 is:

HOUSING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

The Housing Corporation's understanding of retirement housing includes a wide variety of traditional and new models of provision. The Housing Corporation also acknowledges that although the purpose of this housing is primarily to accommodate older people, the age of tenants is not a defining feature.

Properties should be categorised as housing for older people if they are intended for older people (regardless of the actual characteristics of each tenant) and they either incorporate the range of basic facilities and special design features set out below or are specially designated supported housing for older people. The distinctive design features should be over and above lifetime homes adaptations to general needs properties. The age of tenants actually resident is not a defining feature.

Tenants in housing for older people (all special design features) or housing for older people (some special design features) should have access to support services as the need arises to enable them to live in the property for the rest of their lifetimes.

Access to support means that at a minimum, a process is in place to assist in accessing and/or signposting tenants to support services that they need. Except in the case of 'designated supported housing for older people', the delivery of or level of support is no longer a defining feature.

Therefore, whilst much of the stock that was categorised as 'sheltered' housing in earlier years will fall into the category of housing for older people, some 'sheltered' housing without any basic facilities and special design features or designation with support, will be re-categorised as general needs housing at 31 March 2005.

Three types of housing for older people are described below.

Housing for older people (some special design features): Includes remodelled or purpose built grouped housing that has all basic facilities and at least one or both of the special design features listed below. The property must have access to support services to enable older people to live there for their lifetimes. In addition, if there is more than one storey there must be a lift.

Basic facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for residents and/or washing machines in living units or provision for washing machines to be installed. The scheme must also have a communal lounge for people to meet in.

Special design features:

- Living units have walk in showers or bathrooms adapted for people with mobility problems or wheelchair users. Bathrooms in living units that are wheelchair standard meet the criteria for adapted bathrooms.

- The living units, the entrance area into the building and communal areas are designed to wheelchair user standards.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units or part of a building that is covered by this description, you should only include the number of units that you own or manage that are covered. The remaining units should be allocated as necessary to designated supported housing for older people or to general needs.

Housing for older people (all special design features): Includes remodelled or purpose built grouped housing that has all basic facilities and all special design features intended to enable people to live there for the rest of their lifetimes. In addition, if there is more than one storey there must be a lift. All of the following requirements have to be met:

Basic facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for residents and/or washing machines in living units or provision for washing machines to be installed. The scheme must also have a communal lounge for people to meet in.

Special design features:

- Living units must have walk in showers or bathrooms adapted for people with mobility problems or wheelchair users. Bathrooms in living units that are wheelchair standard meet the criteria for adapted bathrooms.

- Living units must have kitchens that are designed to wheelchair user standards.

- There must be a bathroom with provisions for assisted bathing.

- The whole scheme including entrances and the buildings that comprise it must be designed to wheelchair user standards.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units that are covered by this description, you should only include the number of units that you own or manage that are covered. The rest should be allocated as necessary to housing for older people (some special design features), designated supported housing for older people or general needs.

Designated supported housing for older people: Includes buildings with some or none of the special design facilities and features listed above but which provide accommodation specifically designated for older people requiring support with support services in place that are provided by you or another organisation.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units or part of a building that is covered by this definition, you should only include the number of units that you own or manage that are covered by the definition.

7.2. Recommendations relating to supported housing

Recommendation three: Categories of supported housing
Two new categories of supported housing will replace those used in the RSR prior to 2005. To ensure that the two categories of supported housing are sufficiently distinct, we recommend that the correct terminology should be:

- Designated supported housing.

- Purpose designed supported housing.

Recommendation four: Descriptions of supported housing
The final recommended text of the revised descriptions for use in the glossary of the RSR 2005 is set out in full below.

SUPPORTED HOUSING

The term 'supported housing' applies to purpose designed or designated supported housing. The delivery of support under the Supporting People framework does not

necessarily result in the categorisation of housing as supported if the property is not purpose designed or designated for a particular client group. In the absence of either of these two conditions, housing is general needs.

The required designation and design features are listed below and distinguish the two categories of supported housing that the Housing Corporation is interested in knowing about. It is likely to be housing where residents will attract Supporting People Grant although this is not a defining requirement.

Designated supported housing: Includes buildings with no or some special design facilities and features but which provide accommodation for a specific client group with support services provided by you or another organisation.

Purpose designed supported housing: Includes buildings that are specially designed or remodelled to encourage independent living or the adjustment to independence for client groups that require specific design features. There must be support services provided by you or another organisation. At a minimum a building or scheme must have the following:

Facilities: The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for residents or washing machines in living units provided by the landlord. The scheme must also have a communal lounge for people to meet in.

Design features: The entrance area to the building, communal areas and some living units must be designed to wheelchair user standards.

In the case of schemes or buildings that have some units or part of the building that is covered by this definition, you should only record the actual number of units owned or managed that are covered.

Recommendation five: Information about floating support
From 2005 the RSR will no longer request information about 'floating support', as there is no way of ensuring that these data will truly reflect the full scale of this activity and there is an appropriate attention data source. The scale of floating support services provided to HA tenants and by HAs can be identified in Supporting People data collected in the Client Reference Form and managed by the Joint Centre for Social Housing Research on behalf of the ODPM. The Housing Corporation has free access to this rich data source.

We strongly recommend that the Housing Corporation collaborate with the Joint Centre/ODPM or the NHF, who also receive these data, to obtain information about floating support.

Recommendation six: Information about supported housing rents and service charges
We recommend that the Housing Corporation collects more extensive information about supported housing rents from 2005. This should include rents and service charges by property type and size at national and local authority level, including target rents. This will enable the Housing Corporation to evaluate social housing rents as a whole rather than being restricted to information about general needs rents as in the past. This is important in the context of rent restructuring. This recommendation is made subject to evidence that this information will be utilised by the Housing Corporation. The requirement should be reviewed following the results of the RSR 2005 and an evaluation of the value of these data made at that time.

7.3. Other recommendations relating to the development of the RSR 2005 and the new approach

Recommendation seven: Supporting contextualisation exemplification of the new approach
There are misconceptions surrounding the change in approach to data collection relating to housing for older people that are likely to result in inaccurate reporting by HAs. It is important that these agreed changes are accurately contextualised via guidance and/or good practice documents. This is particularly important in clarifying the relationship between access to support and the presence of services such as warden services and lifeline services.

Similarly, some HAs made a range of assumptions about the nature of supported housing based on past funding arrangements and design specification that are not necessarily relevant to the new approach. Contextualisation is again required.

All recommendations relating to the new approach to describing housing for older people and supported housing are underpinned by an overarching recommendation that these changes are exemplified in more detail in a guidance document or circular in the way that categorisation of supported housing was previously exemplified. The Housing Corporation should ensure that the new approach to all aspects of supported housing post implementation of Supporting People and their wider approach to housing for older people is fully understood. This is important good practice in ensuring consistent and accurate reporting within the RSR dataset.

Recommendation eight: New description of general needs housing
In order to complement the new approach to supported housing and housing for older people, the Guidance Notes to the RSR should also include a revised description of general needs housing. This will encourage more consistent and accurate reporting. The recommended description for use in the RSR 2005 is set out below:

GENERAL NEEDS SOCIAL HOUSING

General needs housing covers the bulk of housing stock for rent. It includes both self-contained and hostel/shared housing units and bedspaces. This is stock that is not designated for specific client groups requiring support or does not have the special design features that are specific to housing for older people and supported housing. These special design features are over and above lifetime homes adaptations to general needs properties.

Because the new descriptions of housing for older people and supported housing focus on purpose designation and design features, it is likely that some properties that were categorised as sheltered or supported housing in the 2004 RSR will now be recategorised as general needs housing. If no special designation or design features exist the property should be included as general needs, even if floating support services or other support services are provided to residents under the Supporting People framework.

Even though you may target housing covered by the definition of general needs at specific client groups such as older people, in the absence of a designated support purpose or special design features they should be recorded as general needs for the purposes of the RSR. This does not mean that in policy terms they are not viewed as part of the wider range of housing options provided to this client group.

Recommendation nine: New terminology for leasehold schemes for the elderly
The Housing Corporation wishes to reflect the fact that Leasehold Schemes for the Elderly (LSE) represents one of the wide ranges of housing options available to older

people under its 'Housing for Older People' policy. The new term, Leasehold Housing for Older People (LHOP) will replace LSE in the RSR 2005.

Recommendation ten: Clarification of the RSR 2005 guidance notes
Guidance notes relating to the following aspects of the RSR require further clarification in the RSR 2005:

- How to distinguish between non-self-contained units (shared housing bedspaces) and self- contained units, particularly bedsits, and how these should be recorded in relation to property type and size.

- Guidance relating to target rents, particularly supported housing target rents. In particular, guidance on exemptions, start dates and valuation methods.

- The distinction between an assured and a secure tenancy.

- Guidance about FTE Staff by Employment Function should be reviewed and expanded to explain how the new disaggregated staff functions relate to front-line roles and past categories.

- Clear guidance should be included in the notes to ensure that HAs exclude Supporting People charges from 'housing benefit ineligible service charges' in the breakdown of general needs and supported housing rents from 2005 onwards.

- A revised glossary definition of Care Homes that does not refer to supported housing should be included in the glossary of the RSR 2005.

Recommendation eleven: Pre-population of the electronic RSR
We recommend that the Housing Corporation ensures that the RSR contractor implements a default zero in field if left blank so that HAs are not forced to enter blanks where the field is not relevant to them.

SUMMARY

- The research suggested that there would be significant one-off costs associated with the recommended changes.

- The final set of eleven recommendations covered:
    1. the definitions of Housing for Older People.
    2. the descriptions of Housing for Older People.
    3. the definitions of Supported Housing.
    4. the descriptions of Supported Housing.
    5. how to address floating support.
    6. the information required on supported housing rents and service changes.
    7. the contextualisation and exemplification required for the new approach.
    8. the need for a new definition of general needs housing.
    9. the new terminology for leasehold schemes.
    10. changes required to the RSR 2005 Guidance Notes.
    11. technical changes to the electronic form.

These recommendations have helped inform the RSR 2005 which is now available on the Corporations website.

The main research report can be found on the Dataspring website at www.dataspring.org

Dataspring

Dataspring is based within the Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research, University of Cambridge. Its database provides economic and socio-economic information at district, county, regional and national level for those working in housing; the Housing Corporation, housing associations, local authorities, academic researchers and consultants. The Dataspring team of researchers use data from the Housing Corporation, the Census and other sources to build and maintain a local housing markets database, interactive rent guides, and to analyse the regulatory returns of housing associations. Every year it produces a *Guide to Local Rents* and the *Profile of the Housing Association Sector* on behalf of the Housing Corporation. These are made freely available on the Dataspring website, together with discussion papers, briefing papers and sector studies which provide more in-depth analysis of the social housing sector.

Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research

The Cambridge Centre for Housing and Planning Research is a leading research centre in the Department of Land Economy established in April 1990 with the objective of engaging in research into the economic, planning and legal frameworks of property and property development, particularly in the United Kingdom and Western Europe.

Research has been sponsored by a wide range of public, charitable and private institutions including the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Housing Corporation, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors, the Council of Mortgage Lenders, the Halifax Building Society, individual social landlords and a range of government bodies including the South East England Regional Assembly, Surrey County Council, Glasgow City Council and Cambridge and South Cambridgeshire district councils.

Contact

Dataspring
Department of Land Economy
University of Cambridge
19 Silver Street
Cambridge
CB3 9EP

Tel: 01223 337118
Fax: 01223 330863
E-mail: landecon-dataspring@lists.cam.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE