Providing housing support for older and vulnerable people

Issue
Older people occupy nearly a third of all homes. Nearly two-thirds (60%) of the projected increase in the number of households from 2008 to 2033 will be headed by someone aged 65 or over (see page 48 of the government’s housing strategy).

As people get older, their housing needs often change. Some people need support to be able to continue living in their own homes. Some people, of all ages, have disabilities that mean their homes need to be adapted.

Other people need help if they become homeless. They often need advice and access to services to stop them from going back onto the street. Some of these people have mental health problems that mean they need extra support.

The government recognises that reducing the number of people who are homeless will be a demanding task over the next few years. The number of people defined as homeless is rising and there are signs that rough sleeping is increasing in areas like London.

Actions
The government will provide housing support to older people and those with disabilities by:

- providing support to people who wish to stay in their home through the disabled facilities grant, home improvement agencies and local handyperson services
- ensuring the right advice is available by investing in FirstStop’s national service
- strengthening choice for those who want to move into specialist housing through the care and support specialised housing fund

The government is also working to reduce the number of people who are sleeping rough.

We’ve also made it easier, cheaper and quicker for people who own park homes to enforce their rights and challenge unreasonable
behaviour by site owners. The majority of the residents in this sector are retired or semi-retired and some are vulnerable.

Background
In the 2010 Spending Review, we prioritised protection for vulnerable people, maintaining homelessness grants at 2010 to 2011 levels. We also secured investment of £6.5 billion for Supporting People services between 2011 and 2015.

On 21 November 2011 we published ‘Laying the foundations: a housing strategy for England’. This set out a package of reforms to the housing market.

The Care Act 2014 and associated statutory guidance sets out the principles which underpin all adult safeguarding work and the duties which are placed on local authority social services and housing, health, the police and other agencies.

Bills and legislation
Local housing authorities’ responsibilities towards tackling homelessness and helping homeless people are contained in the Housing Act 1996 and the Homelessness Act 2002.

The Mobile Homes Act 1983 gives residents security of tenure and certain rights including a right to sell their homes and a right to quiet enjoyment of their homes.

The government is committed to safeguarding vulnerable adults, as set out in the ‘Statement of government policy on adult safeguarding.’ The document includes a statement of principles for use by local authority social services and housing, health, the police and other agencies for both developing and assessing the effectiveness of their local safeguarding arrangements.

Who we’re working with
FirstStop
FirstStop is a free, independent national information and advice service for older people, their family and carers funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). It provides joined-up advice across a range of housing, care and finance rights and issues. FirstStop is also investing in local FirstStop
partnerships to offer more intensive local support and advocacy services for older people.

**Handypersons**

Handypersons do odd jobs, home and fire safety, energy checks, fall prevention checks, and direct clients to other services. DCLG has provided £51 million towards handyperson services (2011 to 2015) to deliver small home repairs and adaptations.

The ‘National evaluation of the handyperson programme’ was published on 27 January 2012. The ‘Handypersons’ financial benefits toolkit’ helps local authorities estimate the financial benefits and value for money of these services and to demonstrate savings to commissioning partners.

**Home improvement agencies**

Home improvement service providers are local organisations dedicated to helping older people, people with disabilities, and vulnerable people to live in safety and with dignity in their own homes.

Services are focused on ensuring that existing housing is fit for purpose and that vulnerable people are able to continue living independently as long as possible. Services include advising on improvements and adaptations, help with applying for grants or loans and help in identifying reputable local contractors to do the work. DCLG sponsors Foundations, the national body for home improvement agencies.

**Housing Learning and Improvement Network**

The Housing Learning and Improvement Network is the leading ‘knowledge hub’ for over 5,700 housing, health and social care professionals in England involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older and vulnerable people. The network was previously responsible for managing the Department of Health’s extra care housing fund.

**Shelter**
**Shelter** is a national housing and homelessness charity. The government is funding Shelter to run the National Homelessness Advice Service in partnership with Citizens Advice. This service provides specialist support and training to homelessness advisers across the country to help those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

**Sitra**

**Sitra** is an umbrella membership organisation dedicated to raising standards in the housing care and support sector. Sitra receives funding from DCLG to explore how best the sector can support the integration of housing, care and support and to develop and provide training courses.