

 Centre for
Ageing Better

 Foundations

Finding the funds to fix our homes

Helping people access finance to improve their homes

A Good Home Network briefing



Introduction

Finding the funds to fix our homes

Prior to 2010, local authorities were a key source of financial support for homeowners and landlords unable to pay for home improvement works themselves. But the withdrawal of over £2 billion in private sector grant funding by national government between 2010/11 and 2020/21 has left homeowners largely on their own (Centre for Ageing Better and Healthier Housing Partnership, 2023).

The Good Home Network came together to explore how some local authorities have found ways of continuing to support residents to keep their homes in good condition.

What is the Good Home Network?

The Good Home Network is a hub for active learning connecting professionals across England who are exploring ways to improve poor quality homes in their area. The Centre for Ageing Better set up the Good Home Network, in partnership with **Foundations**, to help local authorities ensure people in their communities can live independently, safely and with dignity in their own homes.

Find out more:

Visit ageing-better.org.uk/good-home-network or email goodhomenetwork@ageing-better.org.uk



The need

Nearly eight million people in England live in homes that are cold, need repair, or have serious hazards, causing harm to their physical and mental health.

Poor-quality homes not only have a social cost to individuals, their families, and their communities, they are estimated to cost the NHS £1.1 billion a year (BRE, 2023), £1.1 billion in formal/paid care costs, and a further £3.5 billion in unpaid care costs (Brimblecombe et al, 2024).

Beyond improving individual health and wellbeing, we know that investing in a healthier home can generate cost savings to the NHS through reduced hospital readmission rates and reduced patient stays (Care & Repair Cymru, 2022).

£1.1 billion

The cost to the NHS from poor-quality homes

£1.1 billion

The cost in formal/paid care requirements



The problem

The assumption that all homeowners can afford to repair, maintain and adapt their homes is not right as 5.2 million homeowners are living in poverty (JRF, 2024).

In fact, the percentages of people living in poverty are fairly evenly split across social renters (33%), private sector renters (31%) and homeowners (36%) (Centre for Ageing Better, 2023).

However, the risk of living in a poor-quality home, and a residents' ability to resolve or improve their situation, is not equally shared across the population.

Half of the 3.5 million non-decent homes in England – those that fail to meet basic decency criteria as defined by the government – are headed by someone aged 55 or over (49%) (Centre for Ageing Better, 2023). Making necessary repairs and adaptations to homes is a particular issue for older, low-income groups.

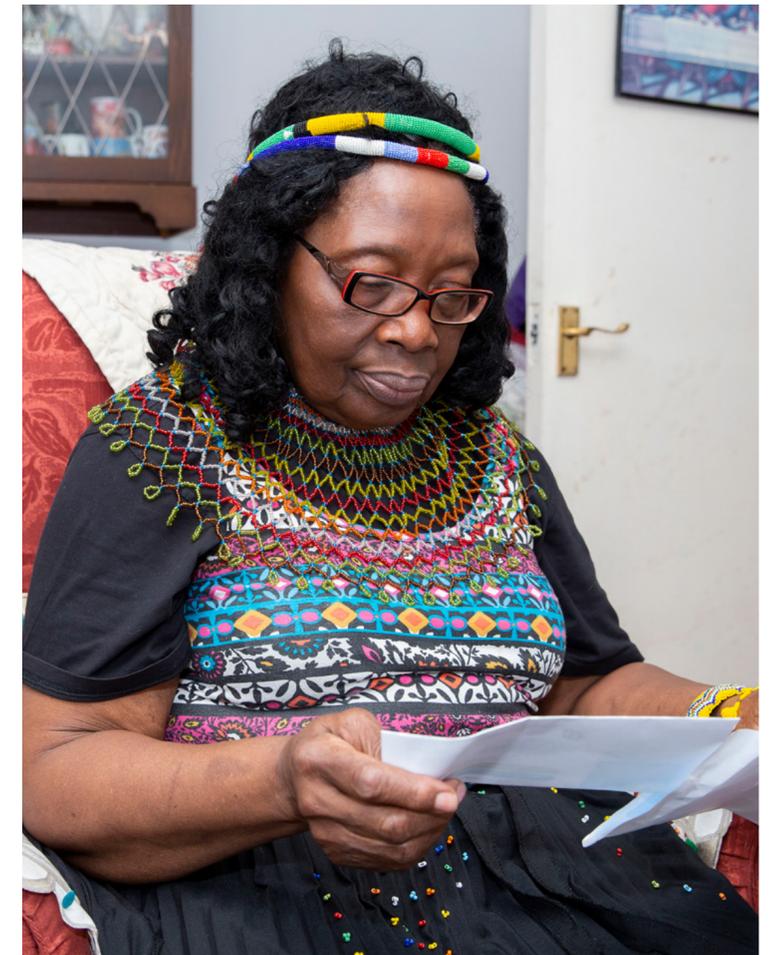


5.2 million

Number of homeowners living in poverty

1.8 million

Number of non-decent homes lived in by people aged 55+



What's required

The scale of investment required to make all homes safe, comfortable and more energy efficient is huge and needs to be facilitated by concerted national and local government action.

A variety of finance options are required to support individuals who are homeowners, live in social housing or in privately rented homes, and with different levels of ability to pay. This needs to include grants and loans (or a combination of both), from both public sources and the private sector.

Despite budgetary challenges, some local authorities are finding ways to support residents. You can read about how five local authorities are doing this in the Centre for Ageing Better's [Finding Funds, Fixing Homes report](#) (see the resources section at end). It shows the support they offer varies between:

- discretionary grants
- in-house loans
- externally administered loans (e.g. administered by not-for-profit lenders)
- area renewal schemes
- practical support to enable self-funders to carry out works



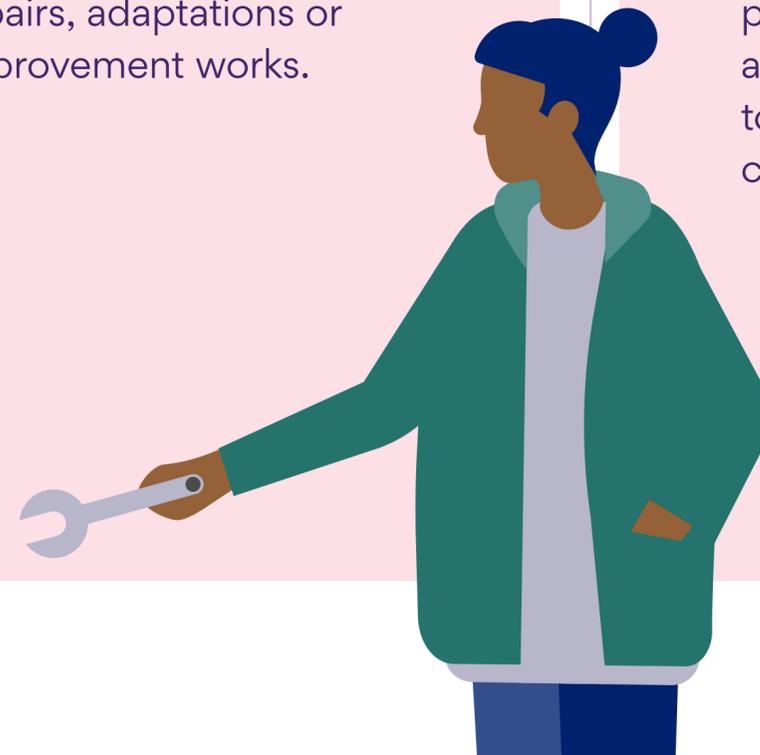
Insights from Good Home Network members

Here are some of insights from places that are working to find ways of supporting residents:

✓ Combined approaches are needed with grants and loans being used together alongside wider support (for examples, referrals to able-to-pay services or credit unions, access to other services such as housing standards). There will always be a need for grants for those people who are unable to take out a loan and for emergencies where quick action is required.

✓ Independent, clear, trusted information and advice – like support that would be provided by a **Good Home Hub** – can help people feel more confident to access funding and organise repairs, adaptations or improvement works.

✓ There is resistance to loans from the public and from professionals (who may be unwilling to put people already struggling financially under what is perceived to be more pressure). Information and advice for everyone could help to build understanding and confidence.



Insights from Good Home Network members

– continued

Here are some of insights from places that are working to find ways of supporting residents:



✓ Many local authorities are over-stretched and there are concerns about whether there is capacity within local authorities to set up and administer loans. Local authority staff lacking the knowledge and confidence to speak about or have introductory conversations about loans and other finance mechanisms is also an issue. However, this could be an opportunity to explore what skills are present in-house across a local authority and to look for external support.

✓ The initial capital required to kickstart a loan scheme is a barrier for many places. Understanding that the capital amount doesn't need to be huge – depending on the type of loan and offer – may encourage places to explore this option more closely. Organisations such as **Parity Trust**, **Lendology**, and Sheffield Homes and Loans have huge experience of supporting local areas.

✓ Longer term funding from central government is needed to scale up any examples of loans currently being provided and to tackle the backlog of poor-quality homes in the owner occupied and private rented sector.

Useful resources



Three Centre for Ageing Better reports from the project to understand how local authorities are finding a way to support residents to improve their homes

- > **Insight report** 'Finding funds, fixing homes: local authority approaches to paying for home improvements'
- > **Full research report** 'Financing Home Improvements: Local Authority Case Studies'
- > **Focus on loans report** 'Developing a local loan offer: insights for local authorities considering adapting or introducing a local loan scheme'

For more information please visit ageing-better.org.uk/good-home-network or contact goodhomenetwork@ageing-better.org.uk

Don't forget...

The Centre for Ageing Better can help promote **stories of success** more widely. If you have worked with people to make their home warmer, safer and more accessible and they would like to share their story about making their home better, do let us know on goodhomenetwork@ageing-better.org.uk. We regularly have enquiries from national and local media outlets who would like to speak to someone directly.

References

- > BRE (2023). Cost of poor housing in England. https://files.bregroup.com/corporate/BRE_the_Cost_of_ignoring_Poor_Housing_Report_Web.pdf
- > Brimblecombe, N et al (2024). Care and Place (CAPE): The relationship between older people's housing characteristics and social care needs, care use and care costs'. Care and Policy Evaluation Centre. London School of Economics.
- > Care & Repair Cymru (2022) Hospital to a Healthier Home. Available at: <https://careandrepair.org.uk/projects/hospital-to-a-healthier-home/>
- > Centre for Ageing Better (2023) State of Ageing <https://ageing-better.org.uk/homes-state-ageing-2023-4>
- > Centre for Ageing Better and Healthier Housing Partnership (2023). Lost opportunities: A decade of declining national investment in repairing our homes. <https://ageing-better.org.uk/resources/lost-opportunities-decade-declining-national-investment-repairing-our-homes>
- > Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2024) UK Poverty 2024: The essential guide to understanding poverty in the UK <https://ageing-better.org.uk/resources/lost-opportunities-decade-declining-national-investment-repairing-our-homes>



Let's take action today for all our tomorrows.
Let's make ageing better.



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