

Health and Social Care cost benefits of senior cohousing

A typical well-designed senior cohousing scheme will significantly reduce public health and social care costs.

Some of these savings come from the support fellow residents happily provide - good neighbourliness is the bedrock to all senior cohousing communities. For example, because everyone knows everyone else loneliness is rarely an issue, and residents will willingly help-out when someone is unwell with shopping, meals, or other errands. Research¹ shows that lonely people are 1.8 times more likely to visit the GP; 1.6 times more likely to visit A&E; and 1.3 times more likely to experience an emergency admission to hospital.



Three recent senior cohousing schemes. Left to right – New Ground, North London; Phoenix Commons, California; and Cannock Mill, Colchester

On top of this senior cohousing communities are carefully designed to enable their residents to age safely and comfortably. For example, we plan to provide single level apartments, lifts, wider doorways, extra insulation, additional handrails and easy-to-access bathrooms. This in turn reduces the chances of falls or illnesses, so there are fewer ambulance call outs, fewer GP visits, fewer community nurse appointments and fewer unplanned hospital admissions.

Some senior cohousing developments go further than this, with the residents sharing the cost of professional care and other health support. This then creates a facility that comes close to the standards provided by a residential care or nursing home.

A 2019 study² by the Housing LIN (Learning and Improvement Network) looked at the likely savings to the State of housing schemes specifically designed and set up for older people. The report calculated that residents living in independent accommodation on a shared site with 24/7 care staff support saved the State more than £2,400 per annum.

The report cited a number of healthcare cost savings. For example

- Fewer GP visits. Save £38 per visit
- Fewer community nurse appointments. Save £31.25 per visit
- Fewer ambulance call-outs. Save £115 per call-out
- Fewer and shorter unplanned hospital admissions.
- Delayed moves to a residential or nursing care setting.
- Lower overall health costs.

¹ 'Investing to Tackle Loneliness', Social Finance, 2015

² 'The Health and Social Care Cost-Benefits of Older People's Housing', Housing Learning and Improvement Network, 2019

The report also identified the following improved outcomes for the residents. These included:

- Increased sense of autonomy and security.
- Fewer accidents or falls.
- Reduced loneliness and depression.



Harbourside seniors cohousing, British Columbia, Nightingale Cohousing in Melbourne and the Passive House standard homes at Lancaster Cohousing

Horizon Senior Cohousing

Clearly, the benefits to individuals and to the State of senior cohousing are significant. The coming together of older people in a purpose-designed environment with the express intention of supporting one another as they age will benefit the residents *and* reduce the health and social care burden for cash-strapped councils.

Horizon Cohousing is exploring the possibility of accommodating a shared live-in care and support worker or qualified nurse if and when residents come to require that assistance – providing much of the professional-level input of a residential care or nursing home at the point where it might be required.

Based on the Housing LIN study quoted above, we believe that over a 20-year period our development has the potential to reduce the burden on the State by many hundreds of thousands of pounds.



The Vrijburcht cohousing scheme in Amsterdam also includes a restaurant and a small community theatre. In Scotland 25 eco homes were built in this seniors cohousing project



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