

## Factsheet 2

# Buying retirement housing

November 2023

### About this factsheet

This factsheet explains options and issues to consider if you are thinking about buying retirement housing. This is specialist housing for older people, which can be simply 'age exclusive' or also offer some level of support or care.

General information about housing for older people and how to choose a suitable option is in factsheet 64, *Specialist housing for older people*. Information on the process of buying a home, including how to find an estate agent or solicitor and help with moving, is in information guide 8, *Housing options*.

The information in this factsheet is applicable in England and Wales. If you are in Scotland or Northern Ireland, please contact Age Scotland or Age NI for further information. Contact details can be found at the back.

Contact details for any organisation mentioned in this factsheet can be found in the *Useful organisations* section.

# Contents

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>1 Recent developments</b>                            | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>2 Introduction</b>                                   | <b>3</b>  |
| <b>3 Scheme management</b>                              | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>4 Scheme manager service</b>                         | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>5 Services and service charges</b>                   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>6 Other charges</b>                                  | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>7 Financial help</b>                                 | <b>10</b> |
| <b>8 Terminating leases</b>                             | <b>11</b> |
| <b>9 The right to manage</b>                            | <b>12</b> |
| <b>10 Protection for residents</b>                      | <b>12</b> |
| 10.1.1 ARHM Private Retirement Housing Code of Practice | 12        |
| 10.1.2 The landlord and the management organisation     | 13        |
| 10.1.3 Service provision and cost                       | 14        |
| 10.1.4 The scheme manager service                       | 14        |
| 10.1.5 Repairs  | 14        |
| 10.1.6 Legal and contractual rights                     | 14        |
| 10.1.7 Re-sale arrangements                             | 14        |
| 10.2 ARCO Consumer Code                                 | 15        |
| <b>11 Transfer fees</b>                                 | <b>16</b> |
| <b>12 Freehold properties</b>                           | <b>18</b> |
| <b>13 Shared ownership and other options</b>            | <b>19</b> |
| Useful organisations                                    | 20        |
| Age UK  | 23        |
| Support our work  | 23        |

## 1 Recent developments

In **England** and **Wales**, from 30 June 2022, ground rents on newly created leases in England and Wales were reduced to zero. From 1 April 2023, following a transition period, this rule applies to newly created leases in retirement housing, regardless of whether the scheme charges '*transfer*' fees.

There are plans for further legislation to be introduced in 2023/24 to include giving leaseholders a new right to extend their lease for 990 years at zero ground rent and making it cheaper and easier to extend a lease or to purchase the freehold.

- The Older People's Housing Taskforce was launched in April 2023. They are looking at options for the provision of greater choice, quality and security of both public and private specialised and supported older people's housing. The taskforce will run for up to 12 months and is due to make recommendations to Government during 2024.

## 2 Introduction

Retirement housing is aimed at older people. Residents must usually be aged over 55 or 60. Most retirement housing is sold on a leasehold basis. This means you have a tenancy granted for a long period of time, for example 99 or 125 years. Many new-build retirement properties now come with 999-year leases.

A lease reduces in length unless you pay to extend it, so after 30 years a 99-year lease becomes a 69-year lease. It is sold at its reduced length when the property changes hands, although it may be possible to extend at the point of purchase. Otherwise, most leaseholders have the right to extend after two years of ownership.

If a lease is not extended and runs out, the leaseholder may be able to stay in the property on the same terms or the landlord may propose to grant a new rolling tenancy. If the landlord wants the property back at the end of the lease, they need a court order to evict and can only do so on certain grounds.

In addition to the purchase price, if you buy retirement housing with an existing lease, you may pay '*ground rent*' to the freeholder (the landlord) each year. Ground rent may be as low as £50 per year but can be £300 or more. It can increase over time – make sure you understand what is charged initially and whether and how often this increases before making any financial commitment. Ground rent on newly created leases in retirement housing was reduced to zero from 1 April 2023.

Leaseholders usually pay a regular service charge to cover the cost of services provided by, or on behalf of, the freeholder. This can be a significant expense, particularly in retirement housing where additional services are often provided.

As a leaseholder, you have different rights to a freeholder. You have a landlord who retains some control over your property and how you use it. This may make your life easier, but could be a big adjustment if you are used to living in a freehold property and making all your own decisions. It is possible to purchase freehold retirement properties, see section 12.

Retirement properties can be bought through shared ownership, which involves buying a share of a property. Depending on the size of your share, you may be charged rent on the remainder. It is important to seek advice before buying on this basis, as your rights and responsibilities are different to a full leaseholder. See section 13 for more information.

Facilities and services in retirement housing vary between schemes so check what is available before buying. Check the potential re-sale value as some retirement properties decline in value and are difficult to sell on. Property websites may share details of recent sale prices. Most leases require you to continue paying service charges while you try to sell, even if you no longer live there. Factsheet 64, *Specialist housing for older people*, has more information.

Contact the Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE) for information on leaseholder rights. They give free advice on specific cases by telephone and also have advice guides on their website.

### 3 Scheme management

Most retirement housing schemes are managed by the landlord or a third-party manager (a '*managing agent*') appointed by the landlord. Some schemes are managed by the residents themselves. All these options are called the '*management organisation*' in this factsheet.

Managing a scheme means providing the services set out in the lease agreement (the '*lease*') and maintaining the building in accordance with the lease, the law, and relevant codes of practice. The type of services a management organisation is responsible for can include:

- provision of a scheme manager service
- upkeep and cleaning of communal areas, such as corridors, lifts, communal lounge, external grounds etc
- repairs and maintenance to the structure, exterior and communal areas
- insurance of buildings.

If you are thinking about buying a retirement property, find out who the management organisation is, how experienced they are at managing leasehold retirement housing, and how often their representatives hold meetings with residents.

Find out whether they belong to a government-approved redress scheme. It is a legal requirement for most management organisations to belong to either The Property Ombudsman or the Property Redress Scheme.

Check whether the management organisation belongs to a recognised trade body, such as the Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM). The ARHM aims to promote and maintain high standards of management in retirement housing. All management organisations registered with the ARHM are bound by its Code of Practice.

You may wish to check whether there is a residents' association that works with the management organisation to ensure residents' views and needs are considered and addressed. For more information on forming a residents' association, see the ARHM website.

You must usually pay a service charge to cover the cost of these services. The management organisation should bill you regularly and collect the money. See section 5 for information on service charges.

You can ask the First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber) to appoint a different management organisation, see section 9. The *First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)* and the Welsh equivalent, the *Residential Property Tribunal Wales*, are called '*the Tribunal*' in this factsheet. Contact LEASE for information on making an application to the Tribunal.

## 4 Scheme manager service

Most retirement schemes have a scheme manager, also known as a house manager, court or estate manager, or more traditionally, a warden. They are distinct from the management organisation responsible for providing services specified in the lease, although they may assist in the provision of these services.

The manager's duties vary between schemes, sometimes considerably. In the past, most managers lived on-site and provided individual support for residents, for example emergency help, emotional support, and help applying for benefits and social care.

Now, the role may involve more administrative and housing management duties. It may be shared by a team of support staff living off-site. In some schemes, an emergency alarm system is the main way for residents to get help and assistance.

Information about a scheme manager's role and duties, hours of service, and details of relief or emergency cover during periods of absence should be included in an information pack. This is provided prior to purchase in some cases (see section 10.1.4).

The scheme manager's overheads can account for a substantial amount of the service charge, as it includes their salary and, if they live on-site, the cost of maintaining their accommodation. It may include their rent if the lease allows it. When looking at schemes, think carefully about the manager's duties and whether you are willing to pay for this service.

Some schemes may not have a scheme manager. This may mean a lower service charge but consider whether a scheme without a manager is right for you and what you would do if your needs change in future.

## 5 Services and service charges

### What services are provided in retirement housing?

Leases typically require the management organisation to provide certain services. These vary from scheme to scheme, but may include:

- **cleaning and general upkeep** of communal areas and grounds.
- **communal or structural repairs and maintenance** – you are usually responsible for repairs inside your property and for arranging contents insurance. You may need to contribute towards a **reserve or ‘sinking’ fund** to cover unexpected or expensive works and planned maintenance of the exterior and communal areas.
- **the scheme manager service.**
- **emergency alarm** provision and upkeep.
- **management fees** – the management organisation may charge a fee for staff time and overheads related to scheme administration.

**The management organisation is only obliged to provide the services set out in the lease.**

### What is the service charge?

A service charge is paid by leaseholders to meet the cost of services provided. **The lease should say which costs can and cannot be recovered.** Some schemes have higher service charges than others and the amount payable can vary from year to year. It is important to be clear about what you can expect to pay, both now and in the future, before making a commitment.

For a one-bedroom flat, you may expect to pay between £1,500 and £3,000 a year, but newer schemes with 24-hour staffing, extensive communal facilities, and on-site care facilities charge up to £10,000 a year. There are other charges as well as service charges (see section 6).

When considering retirement properties, it is a good idea to ask for details of the service charges payable in the last few financial years, so you can see whether these have increased over time.

### **What are my rights around service charges?**

You have rights around service charges that are '*variable*', which means not fixed as part of your rent. You have a legal right to request a summary of the service charge account from your landlord.

This should detail costs incurred over the last accounting period, show how costs relate to charges you are being asked to pay, and say if any costs relate to works which have, or will be, funded by a grant. In this context, '*landlord*' means '*any person who has a right to enforce payment of a service charge*', so it is a good idea to approach your management organisation initially.

If you obtain a summary, you have six months to ask to inspect the full accounts, receipts and other documents, and make copies. You should be given a summary of your rights and obligations with each demand for payment. By law, costs can only be recovered from leaseholders '*to the extent that they are reasonably incurred*' and '*if the services or works are of a reasonable standard*'.

You have a right to challenge the reasonableness of your service charge at Tribunal. In addition, you can ask the Tribunal to determine whether you are liable to pay a charge, for example if your landlord asks you to pay for a service not set out in your lease. You can do this whether or not the charge has already been paid – it may be advisable to pay a charge '*without prejudice*' to your right to challenge it later, as you can protect yourself from enforcement action for unpaid charges.

An Upper Tribunal judgment in 2023 found a weekly '*scheme-based support charge*' for a retirement housing resident to be unreasonable and therefore not payable, as the resident had not been provided with any services in exchange for the charge.

You must be consulted before your landlord carries out expensive works to your property, or to the scheme as a whole, or enters into a long-term contract requiring you to pay more than a certain amount each year.



For more information, see the LEASE website for the guide *Service charges and other issues* and a specific guide, *Leasehold Retirement Housing – A guide to leasehold in the retirement sector*.

## 6 Other charges

If you take out a mortgage to buy a property, you must keep up with the repayments. If you buy via a shared ownership scheme, you may be charged rent on the portion of the property you do not own.

Unless you are a freeholder, if you buy a property with an existing lease you may need to pay '*ground rent*' to your landlord. The amount is set out in your lease and is usually between £50 and £300 a year, but it can be more. Increases are restricted by your lease terms.

For newly created leases in retirement housing from 1 April 2023, the ground rent is zero.

You must pay Council Tax, water and energy bills. Water and fuel charges for communal areas may also be part of your service charge. Unless you are over 75 and receiving Pension Credit, you need to pay a TV licence fee to watch or record live television or watch BBC programmes on a laptop. You may receive a concession on your TV licence; check to see if this is the case.

Make sure you have budgeted for all charges, including additional costs such as telephone and internet bills and insurance. Make sure you can keep up with these payments in the long term and will have a good quality of life once paid. Check you could manage if charges increased.

If you want to alter or improve your home, you may need consent from your landlord and they may charge an administration fee. As with service charges, the reasonableness of these fees can be challenged at Tribunal.

Section 11 has information about '*transfer fees*', which may be charged if you sell or sublet the property, or someone moves in with you.

## 7 Financial help

### Service charges and ground rent

You may be able to get help with some of your service charges by claiming Pension Credit (PC) Guarantee Credit, or Housing Benefit or Universal Credit if you have a shared ownership lease. Reasonable charges for the following services are eligible:

- provision of adequate accommodation including some warden and caretaker services, gardens, lifts, entry phones, portering, rubbish removal, TV and radio relay charges
- laundry facilities like a communal laundry room, but not personal laundry services
- cleaning of communal areas and windows
- minor repairs and maintenance
- home insurance if it must be paid under the terms of the lease.

You may also be able to get help with ground rent. See factsheet 48, *Pension Credit*, factsheet 17, *Housing Benefit*, and factsheet 92 *Universal Credit*, for more information.

### Support services

Your local authority may help with support charges that cannot be met through PC, for example charges for individual support provided by the scheme manager or the emergency alarm system.

In **England**, this may be available under the '*Supporting People*' programme, but coverage is very variable. Ask your local authority whether Supporting People funding is available and if not, what your options are.

In **Wales**, the Housing Support Grant (HSG) may be available for the provision of alarms and monitoring services. This is an amalgamation of three existing grants, including the Supporting People programme.

Further information and Welsh Government guidance on HSG can be found at [www.gov.wales/housing-support-grant-practice-guidance](http://www.gov.wales/housing-support-grant-practice-guidance)

## Council Tax and other bills

If you are on a low income, you may be able to get help with your Council Tax payments. For more information, in **England** see factsheet 21, *Council Tax*, or in **Wales** factsheet 21w, *Council Tax in Wales*.

There are ways you can reduce or get help with energy bills. In **England**, see factsheet 1, *Help with heating costs*. In **Wales**, see Age Cymru factsheet 1w, *Help with heating costs in Wales*.

If you struggle to pay your bills, ask an advice service like a local Age UK or local Age Cymru to carry out a full benefits check to ensure you claim everything you are entitled to, or use the Age UK online benefit calculator.

## 8 Terminating leases

As a leaseholder, you have many basic statutory rights. Additional rights depend on the terms of your lease. Seek independent legal advice on your rights and responsibilities before signing a lease.

An important part of the lease relates to the landlord's ability to terminate it early, known as '*forfeiture*'. If a property is occupied, the landlord cannot forfeit the lease without first obtaining a court order. There are significant restrictions on landlords' ability to do this and it is possible for a leaseholder to seek '*relief*' from forfeiture even after an order is granted.

Most long leases contain a clause allowing the landlord to forfeit the lease if the tenant does not meet their obligations, such as paying ground rent or service charges. It may be possible for a landlord to terminate a lease if the leaseholder causes severe nuisance to other residents.

Before buying a retirement property, check the landlord's forfeiture policies. Ask them to confirm in writing what action might be taken if your needs changed substantially, for example you develop a long-term health condition like dementia. For more information, contact LEASE.

## 9 The right to manage

If your lease was originally granted for a term of more than 21 years, you can form a company with other 'qualifying' leaseholders and take over responsibility for the management of the building. This is known as the 'right to manage'. It only applies to leaseholders of flats, not houses or bungalows.

You do not have to prove any fault on the part of your landlord or management organisation or obtain their consent. However, your building must comply with certain requirements and the number of qualifying leaseholders in the company must be equal to at least half the number of flats in the building.

The right is exercised by the company serving a formal notice on the landlord and any management organisation that is party to the lease.

Alternatively, if the management arrangements put in place by your landlord are unsatisfactory, you can ask the Tribunal to appoint a different management organisation. This right is not available if the landlord is a registered provider of social housing such as a local authority or housing association. For more information, contact LEASE.

## 10 Protection for residents

Codes of practice giving protection for people in retirement housing include the Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM) *Private Retirement Housing Code of Practice*, and the Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO) *Consumer Code*.

### 10.1.1 ARHM Private Retirement Housing Code of Practice

If a management organisation is a member of ARHM, it must adhere to the *Private Retirement Housing Code of Practice*. There are separate versions for **England** and **Wales**, available on the ARHM website.

The Code covers good practice in providing services, including the scheme manager service, and in setting and collecting service charges. It requires the management organisation to invite leaseholders to a meeting at least once a year, where the quality and efficiency of all contracts for services should be discussed. In addition, the management organisation should visit schemes regularly and encourage the setting up of residents' associations.

While not all aspects of the Code are legally binding, it has been approved by government. This means its provisions can be considered by a court or Tribunal if action is taken against a member's management organisation, for example for poor management.

One important aspect of the Code is the requirement to provide all purchasers with a '*Leaseholder's Handbook*'. This may be called a Purchaser's Information Pack or Resident's Handbook. All potential purchasers must be made aware of the Handbook and a copy must be provided in advance of completion if requested.

It is advisable to request a copy at the earliest possible stage, as this can help you make an informed decision about the scheme and whether to proceed with the purchase. Although the Handbook contains important information, the most important document you receive is the lease, as this is legally binding. Make sure your solicitor or independent adviser explains the terms of the lease to you.

The following sections set out the minimum information the Handbook should contain, although management organisations can produce a generic version for all their schemes explaining that each scheme may vary in detail. If so, ask them to give specific written information about the scheme you are interested in.

### **10.1.2 The landlord and the management organisation**

The name and address of the landlord (generally the freeholder) and the management organisation, with information on their contractual relationship and any detailed rules concerning the scheme management.

### 10.1.3 Service provision and cost

Details of services you will be charged for, including buildings insurance, with a '*full, clear and complete*' breakdown of all the charges you will be expected to pay.

### 10.1.4 The scheme manager service

A description of the duties of the scheme manager, including hours of service and out-of-hours provision, together with details of the emergency alarm system and how it works.

### 10.1.5 Repairs

Information on how repairs should be reported and target timescales for their completion.

### 10.1.6 Legal and contractual rights

A summary of leaseholders' legal rights, including the rights set out above on lease extension, challenging unreasonable service charges, and exercising the '*right to manage*'.

A plain English explanation of the main terms of the lease, including the landlord's obligations and your liabilities as a leaseholder.

### 10.1.7 Re-sale arrangements

Any specific re-sale arrangements applying at a scheme should be made clear in the Handbook. Some management organisations offer help with re-sales, or require you to seek approval when choosing a buyer.

Make sure you are aware of any restrictions on re-sales in your lease. These include requirements for prospective buyers or occupiers to be over a certain age, or for you to sell the property back to the landlord when you no longer need it.

The Handbook should also include an explanation of any '*transfer fees*' charged upon re-sale, or in other situations such as if the property is sub-let or the occupancy changes (see section 11).

## Consultation and complaints

Information on consultation and complaints procedures, including which government-approved redress scheme the management organisation belongs to. Details of an existing residents' association, or information on how to form one.

### 10.2 ARCO Consumer Code

ARCO is the main body representing '*Integrated Retirement Community Operators*' (also known as '*housing-with-care*' providers). The *Consumer Code* applies to certain schemes run by ARCO members. It does not apply to all the schemes they provide, so make sure you check whether a specific scheme is covered. Schemes covered by the Code may offer a higher level of personal care services than other schemes.

The Code requires the provision of certain core services, for example domestic services for residents and meals available in restaurants or dining areas. Staff must be available on the premises 24 hours a day.

Marketing, advertising and sales materials must be up-to-date, clear and accurate, and must not confuse or mislead. You must be given an accurate representation of a scheme's tenure arrangements, care arrangements, and residents.

You must not be subject to any aggressive sales techniques and must be given time to digest information and raise queries before committing to a property or package of services.

You must be given a '*Key Facts*' summary of the mandatory and discretionary charges as soon as possible after expressing an interest, as well as clear information on how the scheme is managed and how care and other services are organised.

Along with the Key Facts summary, you must be given detailed information on certain charges, including a copy of the latest service charge budget or accounts if the charge is variable.

You must be given information on any fees payable if, for example, you sell or sublet the property or the occupancy changes (*'transfer fees'*), with realistic worked examples of the financial impact. It should be clear from the provider's marketing materials and website if transfer fees are payable.

You must be told the current size of the reserve fund, if there is one, and what happens if the fund is unable to cover the full costs of major works.

You are provided with a contract setting out your rights and responsibilities and those of the landlord or management organisation. These can include age restrictions for residents, arrangements for repairs and maintenance, and rules around the keeping of pets. Any personal care services provided by an ARCO member should be clearly described in a separate contract.

If you buy a property second hand, the seller should give you the Key Facts document and other information above. Speak to the scheme's landlord or management organisation if they do not, or if you have any questions. You can access the full Code on the ARCO website.

## 11 Transfer fees

Some leases require a leaseholder to pay a fee to the landlord or management organisation in certain circumstances. These fees are known by different names, including *'transfer'*, *'event'*, *'exit'* or *'departure'* fees. They are most commonly triggered when a property is sold or sub-let, but may be payable if there is a change of occupancy, for example if a new partner, relative or carer moves in.

There is often a lack of transparency about fees and calculations. They may be calculated as a percentage of the re-sale price or market value of the property. Most *'housing-with-support'* schemes charge a fee of one or two per cent. However, some newer schemes offering additional on-site facilities and services may charge more, for example 10 or 30 per cent. Extra care schemes tend to charge more.



The ARHM Codes for both **England** and **Wales** require management organisations to '*include a clear and prominent explanation of the terms of any event fees in any pre-sale information they provide*'. This should include details of how the fee is calculated and worked examples of what you might expect to pay.

If this cannot be provided directly to the purchaser, it should be given to the seller's solicitor with '*prominent instructions*' to pass to the purchaser as soon as possible. Similar information should be given in the Leaseholder's Handbook.

Management organisations should make it clear if a fee is payable simply as a consequence of moving out, or as a way to keep service charges lower for residents.

Under the ARCO Code, purchasers must be informed about any transfer fees payable as soon as possible after expressing an interest in a property. They must be given information on:

- the amount of the fee and how and when it is payable
- how the fee is calculated, with realistic and transparent worked examples
- the percentage of the fee that goes into a reserve fund, if any
- what, if anything, the customer will receive for the fee
- who will receive the fee
- whether any element of the fee will be held in trust.

**Although the Codes offer some protection against unfair or hidden fees, the lease ultimately dictates if a fee is payable and how it is calculated.**

It may not be possible to see a copy of a property's lease until you make an offer. Thus, it is important to request detailed pre-sales literature, such as a Leaseholder's Handbook or Key Facts document, as well as a written explanation of any transfer fee terms in the lease.

Ask a solicitor or independent adviser to explain the terms and give you a worked example of how much you would have to pay if your property reaches a certain value.

### Note

The Law Commission, an independent body that keeps the law under review and makes recommendations to Parliament, published a draft code of practice in 2016 to regulate the charging of transfer fees and protect leaseholders from unfair or hidden fees. The government committed to approving the code but has yet to do so.

Once approved, it will apply to all new leases and certain existing leases on re-sale.

It is hoped that the Older People's Housing Taskforce may help push transfer fee reforms forward.

## 12 Freehold properties

There may be an opportunity to buy a retirement bungalow or house freehold, although most retirement properties are leasehold. If you do buy freehold, you need to sign a deed of covenant to accept management services from a specific provider.

As a freeholder, you do not have the protection of leasehold legislation. The government is proposing to give freeholders on private and mixed-tenure estates equivalent rights to leaseholders in relation to challenging service charges and asking the Tribunal to appoint a new management organisation but these are not in force yet.

The ARHM Code of Practice is principally aimed at leasehold retirement housing. However, managers of mixed-tenure schemes are instructed to treat their freeholders and leaseholders equally, as far as is possible. Freehold properties on retirement schemes registered with ARCO should be covered by its Code.

Freehold houses should not be confused with blocks of flats where the leaseholders have exercised the collective right to buy the freehold of the block.

These occupiers are not freehold owners individually, but leaseholders who are also members of a freehold owning company. You should seek independent legal advice if considering this option.

## 13 Shared ownership and other options

### Shared ownership

Shared ownership allows you to purchase a share in a property and pay rent on the remainder. You can purchase additional shares until you 'staircase' up to full ownership.

Seek independent legal and financial advice if you are considering shared ownership, as there are potential drawbacks.

You may find it difficult to move if property prices go up and you only own a small share of your home. You may find it difficult to staircase up, as additional shares are bought based on the value of the property at the time you staircase, not the original value.

Even if you only own a small percentage of a property, you are likely to have to pay service charges in full.

If you fall behind on the rent payments due on the part of the property you do not own, it is possible for the landlord to evict you in the same way as a tenant and you could lose your equity stake in the property.

In **England**, there is a current scheme for people aged 55 or over, called *Older People's Shared Ownership*. In this scheme, your maximum equity share is limited to 75 per cent, but once you reach this level, you do not have to pay rent on the remainder.

### Other options

There are other options that could enable you to purchase a retirement property if you would otherwise find this difficult, or make the process of moving easier.

There are '*leasehold schemes for the elderly*' that work in a similar way to Older People's Shared Ownership, and '*Lifetime Lease*' plans, which offer you the opportunity to purchase the right to live in a property for the rest of your life.

Some developers allow you to '*part exchange*' your existing property for a retirement home. This enables you to move without needing to sell your property on the open market, although the developer takes a percentage of its market value.

See the Elderly Accommodation Counsel HousingCare website for more information.

## Useful organisations

### **Association of Retirement Housing Managers (ARHM)**

[www.arhm.org](http://www.arhm.org)

Telephone 0797 431 1421

Trade association representing organisations managing retirement housing. Its Code of Practice applies primarily to leasehold retirement housing.

### **Associated Retirement Community Operators (ARCO)**

[www.arcouk.org/](http://www.arcouk.org/)

Telephone 0203 697 1204

The main body representing 'housing-with-care' providers in the UK. Schemes provided by ARCO members may be known as retirement villages, extra care housing, assisted living, close care apartments, or independent living. Some are covered by ARCO's *Consumer Code*.

### **Citizens Advice**

England or Wales go to [www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

In England telephone 0800 144 8848

In Wales telephone 0800 702 2020

National network of advice centres offering free, confidential, independent advice, face to face or by telephone.

### **Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC)**

[www.housingcare.org](http://www.housingcare.org)

[www.hoop.eac.org.uk/hooptool/](http://www.hoop.eac.org.uk/hooptool/) (HOOP tool)

EAC hold details of specialist housing for older people across the UK, which can be viewed on their HousingCare website.

Their online Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) tool helps you to identify the aspects of your home you find most difficult and local services and accommodation that may be suitable.

### **First-tier Tribunal (Property Chamber)**

[www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-property-chamber](http://www.gov.uk/courts-tribunals/first-tier-tribunal-property-chamber)

Handle applications, appeals and references relating to disputes over property and land. They have a network of regional offices across England that deal with residential property disputes.

### **Leasehold Advisory Service (LEASE)**

[www.lease-advice.org/](http://www.lease-advice.org/)  
Telephone 020 7832 2500

LEASE provide free 15-minute telephone advice to members of the public on residential leasehold law. They can help if your enquiry is about a flat or leasehold house with a lease longer than 21 years. Advice is also available via post or email if you have a more complex query or would prefer a written response. It is a good idea to check the LEASE website for any relevant advice guides before contacting them.

### **Property Ombudsman (The)**

[www.tpos.co.uk](http://www.tpos.co.uk)  
Telephone 01722 333306

Independent service that helps settle disputes for buyers, sellers, tenants and landlords of property in the UK.

### **Property Redress Scheme**

[www.theprs.co.uk](http://www.theprs.co.uk)  
Telephone 0333 321 9418

Consumer redress scheme for customers of property agents and property professionals.

### **Residential Property Tribunal Wales**

[www.residentialpropertytribunal.gov.wales/](http://www.residentialpropertytribunal.gov.wales/)  
Telephone 03000 252 777

An independent tribunal that resolves disputes relating to private rented and leasehold property in Wales.

### **Shelter**

[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)  
Telephone 0808 800 4444 (free call)

A national charity providing telephone advice to people with housing problems including tenancy rights, homelessness, repairs and Housing Benefit.

**Shelter Cymru**

[www.sheltercymru.org.uk](http://www.sheltercymru.org.uk)  
Telephone 08000 495 495

**Welsh Government**

[www.gov.wales](http://www.gov.wales)  
Telephone 0300 060 4400

The devolved government for Wales.

## Age UK

Age UK provides advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online. Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

### Age UK Advice

[www.ageuk.org.uk](http://www.ageuk.org.uk)

0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8.00am to 7.00pm

### In Wales contact

#### Age Cymru Advice

[www.agecymru.org.uk](http://www.agecymru.org.uk)

0300 303 44 98

### In Northern Ireland contact

#### Age NI

[www.ageni.org](http://www.ageni.org)

0808 808 7575

### In Scotland contact

#### Age Scotland

[www.agescotland.org.uk](http://www.agescotland.org.uk)

0800 124 4222

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# Our publications are available in large print and audio formats

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The evidence sources used to create this factsheet are available on request.

Contact *resources@ageuk.org.uk*

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