

What Does Extra Care Do For Society?

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When deciding whether or not to downsize into retirement property your main consideration will be about the benefits for yourself and your family and that is how it should be. Moving into the right sort of property when you are older means you can retain your independence for longer, reduce your financial outgoings, preserve your capital to leave for the children and deliver very significant health benefits.

Less obvious is the benefit that retirement property offers for society as a whole. First of all, moving into any sort of retirement property will free up your old property. A report for the Local Government Association estimated that older people occupy 3.3m homes that are now bigger than they need and if more older people downsized that would have a big impact on the pressure to build new houses.

An even bigger benefit for society would be delivered if more older people downsized into property that was designed on the 'extra-care' model. In extra-care developments everyone lives independently in their own property but additional services, including personal care, are available on site if and when you need them. There are also communal facilities on site to encourage residents to meet other people and socialise.

A report for the Homes and Communities Agency estimated that on average a person downsizing into this sort of property will save the public purse about £440 per year. Why? Because the health benefits of this type of life reduces pressure on the NHS (one of the biggest causes of ill health among older people is depression linked to loneliness which is less likely to occur in an extra-care environment) and if you do develop health or care needs they can be delivered more quickly and effectively in this type of environment.

That is why I believe we need to encourage the development of extra-care retirement property rather than 'standard' retirement property and to make sure that older people understand the benefits that it offers to them personally and have all the information they need to make an informed choice.

Finally, and this cannot be emphasised enough, although most older people will benefit from downsizing into an extra-care environment the personal benefits are maximised if you make the move in a timely fashion. If you move before you are struggling to manage in your old property the experience will be less stressful and the transition will be easier. The best providers will offer assistance with the move to make sure things go well – be sure to ask how they can help when choosing your property.

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