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# Finding the right place to grow older

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Improving  
housing choices  
for older people

August 2023

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**In collaboration with:**

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA)  
Greater Manchester Ageing Hub

Kindly supported by the **Centre for Ageing Better**

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# Introduction

**This report - Finding the right place to grow older - investigates how we can better understand the difficulties faced by over 4 million older people actively seeking to move home to improve their quality of life.**

It explores how housing strategies can be made more responsive to local circumstances and personal experiences, so that we can close the ‘rightsizing’ gap by improving the housing choices that older people have where they live.

This research was commissioned by The Centre for Ageing Better, working with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and their Housing, Planning and Ageing group.

## About the Centre for Ageing Better

Everyone has the right to a good life as they get older and our whole society benefits when people are able to age well. But far too many people face huge barriers, and as a result are living in bad housing, dealing with poverty and poor health and made to feel invisible in their communities and society.

Ageism, including discrimination in employment, stark inequalities in people’s health and financial circumstances, chronic underinvestment in helping people to age well and a lack of political focus – are all contributing to this growing and critical problem.

At the Centre for Ageing Better we are pioneering ways to make ageing better a reality for everyone. We aim to inspire and inform those in power to tackle the inequalities faced by older people, call out and challenge ageism in all its forms and encourage the widespread take-up of brilliant ideas and approaches that help people to age better.

Get it right and more of us can experience good health, financial security and be treated fairly and with respect as we grow older.

Help us make sure everyone can age better.

# Foreward

**Paul Dennett, Mayor of Salford, Deputy Mayor of Greater Manchester**

**We all need homes which keep us healthy and make us feel secure. Too many of our homes are not fit for purpose across life stages and over 4 million older people across the country want to move.**

There are huge inequalities in the way that older people experience their later life and for too many in Greater Manchester the basic requirement of a ‘safe, decent and affordable’ home is not being met, with the experiences of living through the pandemic making that all the more painful.

However, the reasons for wanting to move are not just about the home that we live in. The place that we live in has a vital role in our health and happiness. Whether or not we live near to our friends and family, to green space, near to public transport routes or to the things that we enjoy doing.

When thinking about solutions that help us live a good later life, the conversation we have is often about specific types of housing rather than the places that these homes are located within.

Previous research undertaken by Manchester School of Architecture called “Rightsizing” showed that older people are mainly motivated by the same needs of any age group when it comes to moving home rather than just downsizing. It promoted an approach to planning for housing which encompasses a more positive, empowering decision-making process.

This new research has uncovered that what motivates people to move home is mainly the experience of the place in which they live. The solutions to this need to be found locally based on specific experiences of older people in a certain area, and whether improvements can be made there or options provided elsewhere. Based on analysis of national data, the research has created five different groups of older people and a methodology based on understanding of people’s lived experience which can be applied locally by policy makers and practitioners to find these solutions.

In Greater Manchester, we are committed to supporting people of all ages to find the home and place that make them happy. This research has been trialed in neighbourhoods and is helping us to better understand what older people in different areas need and work towards developing policies and practical actions to address this.

These policies and actions cover improvements to existing homes – such as working with localities to strengthen and expand the availability of Home Improvement Agency-style services, and joining together health and housing services more effectively. We have also engaged with councillors, housing associations and planners to use this research to learn about where new homes need to be built.

This new research is a product of the partnership between Manchester School of Architecture, the Centre for Ageing Better, and the work of the Ageing Hub within our Combined Authority. It provides a fresh new approach to understanding what defines a happy and healthy later life. It is this level of understanding which has the ability to transform the way we plan for the future of our communities.



# Rightsize in the Rightplace

There is a significant gap between the desires of older people, and the housing choices available to them.

Over 4 million older people want to move home, for a variety of reasons, such as feeling disconnected from their neighbourhood, their home doesn't meet their needs, or they want to live closer to family.

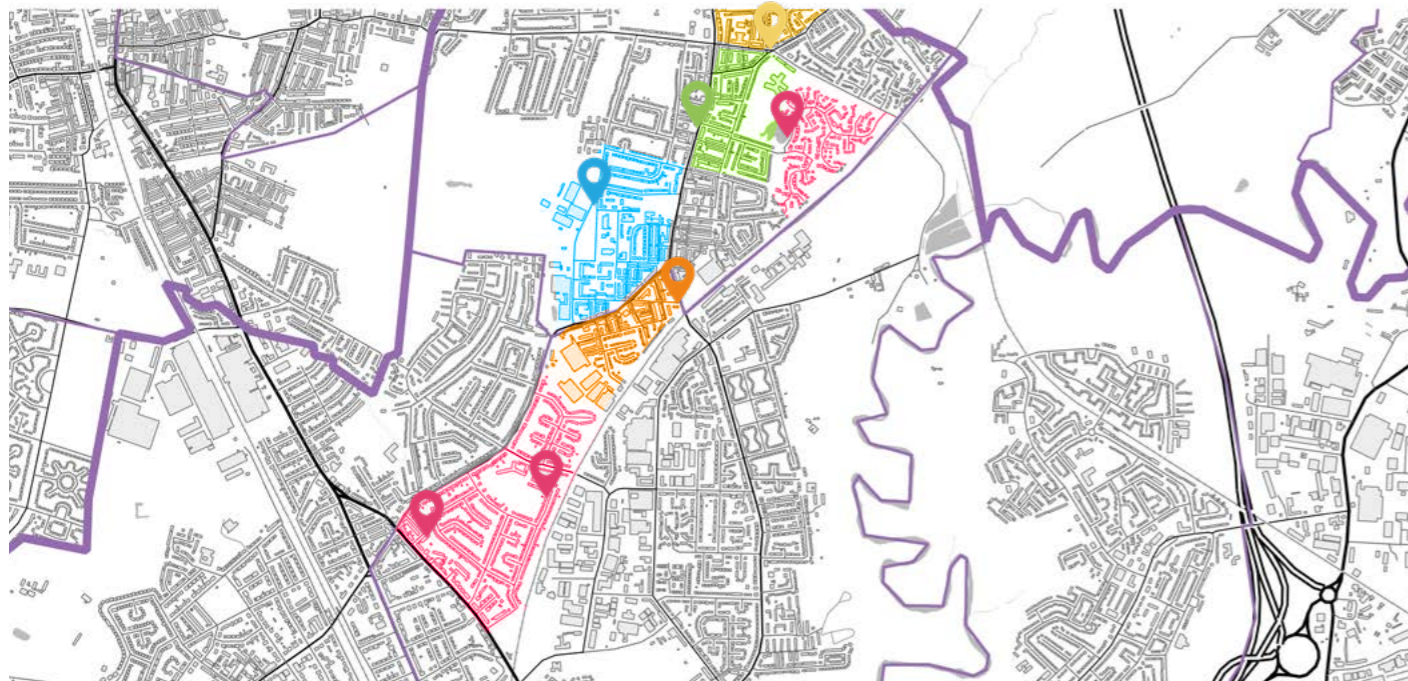
Millions more wish to find ways of maintaining their quality of life within their existing home. Through this research, we aim to provide a fresh perspective and a new approach to understanding older people's housing choices.

This information can then be used to help shift the emphasis from downsizing to 'rightsizing', creating places which support healthier, longer lives for our ageing population.

In order to address the diverse aspirations of our ageing population, we must rethink how we design and plan our towns and cities. As this report highlights, plans and housing strategies need to be more responsive to local and personal circumstances to improve housing choices older people. The emphasis must shift from downsizing to 'rightsizing'.

## Who is this report for?

This report is designed to help local decision-makers, town planners, councillors, and those responsible for housing strategies - to understand the findings of the project and learn about how it might be applied to their work. It may also be of interest to community groups who are developing neighbourhood plans, and those interested in creating age-friendly movements.



## Rightsize

**Around 2 million households in England are headed by someone over the age of 55 living in homes that fail the minimum Decent Homes Standard, and only around 9% of existing UK housing stock is meeting even minimum accessibility standards. It is abundantly clear that very few older people are able to find and access housing options in the market - across all tenures - that could improve their quality of life.**

When it comes to choosing a home, it is often assumed that older people should downsize, or move into specialist accommodation, freeing up larger homes for families. But, in fact, older people are a diverse group with differing mental and physical capacities, experiences, interests and needs. This diversity is too often ignored.

Previous research commissioned by Ageing Better and the GMCA identified a lack of positive housing options for older people wishing to, or needing to 'rightsized'. This is a gap of critical concern for the millions of over 55's enduring poor quality and inappropriate housing. The research explored the idea of downsizing and discovered that the majority of older people who move home do not 'downsize'. In fact, those that do downsize, only do so by one bedroom less. Additionally, very few older people actually move at all (just 3.4%) - despite many living in inadequate and inappropriate housing.

The concept of rightsizing recognises the importance of the decisions that older people make about moving home. These decisions are based on improving quality of life, as well as balancing any aspirations and restrictions that an older person might have.

The ability of older people to 'rightsized' is affected by the availability of options offering a better quality of life in a suitable location, and the accessibility of those options. Rightsizing can only occur when better options are both available (marketed in a reasonable location) and accessible (affordable and of the right tenure). A rightsizing gap occurs when better options are unavailable or inaccessible, or both.

Understanding the housing options that are available and accessible to different people, specific to where they live, requires both an understanding of the quality of life that older people have in their existing homes and communities, and the potential for this to be improved through moving home, adaptations or changes to their neighbourhood.

Re-framing the discussion around rightsizing enables a more nuanced and accurate investigation of the barriers and facilitators to moving, or staying in the same home.

Visit here to learn more about the RightSizing report:



[https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1168/rightsizing\\_msa\\_final3.pdf](https://greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/1168/rightsizing_msa_final3.pdf)



## Rightplace

Similarly to Rightsizing, the idea of ‘finding the rightplace to grow older’, articulated in this research, is intended to enable people to choose the neighbourhood and housing location most appropriate for their ambitions and needs as they grow older.

This is an important distinction. Policies and programmes that enable people to stay living where they are, tend to emphasise the detrimental effect that having to move away from a supportive community and neighbourhood, in order to access appropriate and affordable housing can have. However, this approach can miss the similarly deep impact that being prevented from moving can have on older people, their families, and the wider economy.

The key point is that the concept of ‘Rightplace’ enables both of these options, and emphasises the active involvement of each individual in such important decisions.

Understanding which choices are available for, and most suitable for, the specific older people living in a particular location is of great importance in the efforts of local authorities, housing providers and developers. Planning interventions and housing strategies need to be effective and appropriate for different people and the housing choices that they wish to make as they grow older.

Tools for supporting housing strategy and planning (such as Strategic Housing Market Assessments) now routinely consider housing for an ageing population, but generally focus on changing requirements for specialist accommodation. This is a significant oversight when 91% of the population live in mainstream housing. The nature of these assessments means that they do not routinely address the detail of specific neighbourhoods, or the experiences of older people who live there.

The key purpose of this research is to explore how insights from the analysis of national data can be connected with planning data on particular places, and used alongside direct engagement with the older people who live there.

The research focuses on developing practical methods which can complement existing efforts by communities, local authorities and housing providers to understand the most appropriate housing offer for older people.

The aim is to discover the interventions which would be most effective in reducing the rightsizing gap in particular areas, enabling people to find the ‘right place’ to grow older.



# Finding the Rightplace

This research is intended to provide a fresh perspective on how to explore and understand older people's housing choices, and how we use this information to create places which support people and help them to live healthier, longer lives as they grow older.

The Rightplace research presents new evidence and explores how to develop place and person specific approaches. For example, one of our central findings is that it is a combination of social relationships, services, facilities and accommodation that define our sense of the 'right place' to grow older.

Through this research, we explore how we might achieve a fundamental reorientation of housing strategies from a tendency to focus on age and socio-economic class, to a more place and person specific approach.

A key problem for policy makers and planners that we explore in this research is how to identify the specific barriers and opportunities that particular people (living in general needs housing) face when attempting to rightsize as they grow older.

Understanding these local conditions enables us to identify the types of intervention likely to be most effective in improving choice, both across wider areas and in specific neighbourhoods.

The research is based around three key considerations:

- How can we identify the range of housing needs of older people specific to certain geographical areas?
- How can we better understand the housing options currently available in specific locations or places?
- How can we support differentiated and tailored policy and planning approaches, to offer diverse housing choices for older people?

## The Right Place approach

The aim of Rightplace is to better understand the needs of older people through direct engagement with them, combine these insights with place-specific data, and then create a model to be used to develop policies and create better outcomes for older people.

A range of quantitative, qualitative, engaged and design research methods were used, across seven stages, to both generate evidence and develop and test more place and person specific responses.

A short overview of the methodologies and findings is given below:

## 1: Importance of place

The first stage of research: Importance of place - began by exploring how the experience of older people from different groups can support more differentiated and tailored policy and planning approaches. Our analysis used national survey data (UK Understanding Society), related to older people's housing choices, with more than 16,000 respondents over 55 years of age. This work explored whether there could be distinct groups of older people with shared experiences and preferences in relation to housing choices.

A key finding from this stage of the research was that it is the wider experience of 'home' rather than 'house' which provides the clearest indicator of older people's preference to stay or move from where they live. This finding highlights the need to find ways to better understand the individual housing experiences of older people in the specific context of where they live.

## 2: Different choices

The second stage of research - Different choices, identified five distinct groups of older people who have sets of similar requirements for improved housing choices. Crucially, these requirements are related to an individuals' experience of their neighbourhood, rather than age, socio-economic class or tenure. These findings provide a strong framework for better understanding the individual housing experiences of older people in the specific context of where they live.

## 3: Rightsizing policy

The third research stage - Rightsizing policy, proceeded to explore how identifying these 'types' of older people's experience can support more differentiated policy and planning approaches tailored to specific places.

## 4: Connecting with people

A bespoke survey tool was created for this research stage, to enable the lived experience of local residents to act as a bridge between more general categories of housing choice and the specifics of place. For example, this was used to identify which of the five groups our participants (local residents who engaged in site-specific workshops in the fifth research stage locating choice) were most likely to belong. This research finds that features of place, such as physical location, social relationships, facilities and activities, often have a defining influence in the housing decision-making process of older people.

## 5: Locating choice

This next research stage used a specific place in Greater Manchester - Reddish, in the Borough of Stockport - to further explore how the general experience of the five identified groups can be related to the features of a particular place. A desktop study and site visits identified important features and assets of the area. Correlations between different aspects of UK Census data were used to locate some key characteristics of older people within the neighbourhood. In particular, the relationship between age, tenure, health and living arrangements were explored. Architectural analysis was used to examine the types and ages of houses in the area to assess adaptability and accessibility. Urban design analysis was used to assess the social and transport infrastructure. This information provided a critical baseline for engagement with local people, and underpins the place-specific findings.

This work demonstrated how using and combining different sources of data specific to a particular place can help identify the kinds of housing choices available to different groups of older people in specific locations. The next step was to connect this understanding to specific understandings of lived experiences.



### 6: Housing option analysis

This research stage engaged directly with a number of older people in Reddish to explore their experience of the difficulties of rightsizing where they live.

To connect this analysis of place with the understanding of the different groups identified in Different choices, the survey tool created in Connecting with people was used to predict the likely group membership of participants in the engaged research.

The findings for the participants in the engaged research was consistent with the expectations set out by the group analysis, and also revealed additional nuances about the potential conditions and motivations of the five different groups.

### 7: Finding the right place to grow older

This final part of the research combined the findings from the six research stages above to explore how local housing choices for older people can be improved. This work shows how the findings from the different areas of research can be brought together to provide greater insight into different kinds of older people's housing choices specific to where they live.

Furthermore, the work suggests how it may be possible to use these, or similar techniques, to create housing policy and planning responses more tailored to the

ambitions and needs of older people, across our neighbourhoods and cities.

The remainder of this document describes the key findings of all seven stages of the research and the connections between them. It summarises the exploration of how national data, analysis of place and direct engagement with older people provides a better understanding of the housing choices they have, where they live.

The findings are presented in the following order: the evidence for emphasising a place-based approach; the data analysis identifying distinct groups of older people (shown as a statistical summary of each group), a description of the group's characteristics, and potential policy and planning responses are set out.

Each of these is then explored in person and site-specific detail, by taking examples of participants from the area of Reddish (each of these groups are then explored) and setting out their experience of the area and the challenges of rightsizing for them.

The practical stages required to undertake the next stage of analysis are then set out as a step-by-step guide, in order to support the replication of similar approaches by other researchers, local authorities, housing providers and developers across the country.

Lastly, two individual experiences are then used as an example of this analysis together with site specific details.



Striving and Disconnected



Stable and Discontent



Struggling and Embedded



Aspiring and Changing



Established and Attached





## The Importance of Place Older people's moving preferences are defined by their experience of place.

A large number of questions in the Understanding society survey were analysed to see if they had any statistical significance in predicting the likelihood of respondents having a preference to move or stay in their current home. We found that no single variable had any significance, but when we looked at a group of variables there was a much more coherent set of answers for those who wanted to stay compared with those who wanted to move.

Our conclusions are that for a place to be considered suitable for growing older in, multiple different resources have to be available at the same time and in the same location. The questions used considered a range of housing situations, personal circumstances and wider neighbourhood conditions.

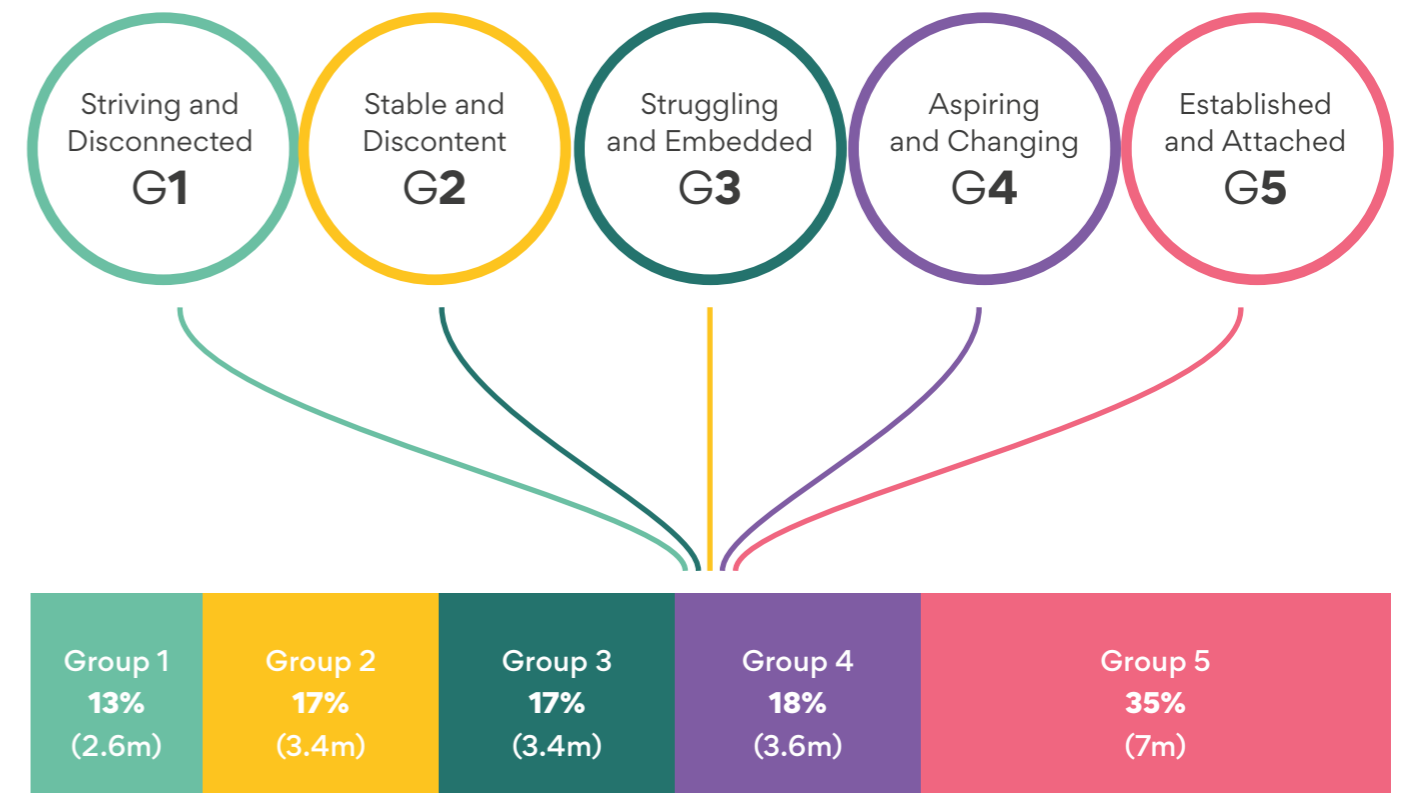
Our analysis in Importance of place showed that no individual factor provided a clear predictor of the preference to stay or move home. However, when responses related to the wider neighbourhood, personal circumstances and housing were taken together, this provided a very strong indicator of the preference to move or stay.

## Understanding different choices Over 4 million people over 55 years of age would prefer to move home.

Using the approach outlined in Different choices, five distinct groups of older people have been identified who have similar requirements for improved housing choices. This analysis showed that contrary to assumptions in much housing and care literature, these groups are not defined by age, socio-economic class or tenure - but by their experience of where they live.

When these findings are extrapolated to the UK population as a whole, the smallest group would contain 2.6m people and the largest 7m. Each will require different policy interventions and support programmes to enable them to find the right place - and the best quality of life - as they grow older.

The diagram below provides a colour key to the analysis, referencing the key characteristics of these groups using descriptive names and indicating the relative proportion of the 20m over 55's that they are likely to represent.



Size of each group as a percentage of older 20m older people (Aged 55+)





# Group Findings

The following pages contain a summary of the findings related to each group, split into three areas: key statistics on the group, a group characteristic summary that also includes potential policy responses, and an example participant from each group. Note that group 1 has a tenure specific policy response page to explore the options further for this group.



## Striving and Disconnected

Limited links to the community and lower level of satisfaction with neighbourhood. Fewer personal resources to enable improvement in their housing situation.

**Participant 22**  
Ward Location  
**Central**



## Stable and Discontent

Neither wealthy nor poor, with moderate levels of satisfaction with their life. This group despite being older on average, has a relatively high preference for moving.

**Participant 20**  
Ward Location  
**Central**



## Struggling and Embedded

Experiencing significant health and income inequalities, but high satisfaction with their neighbourhood and the social connections they have created there.

**Participant 03**  
Ward Location  
**North**



## Aspiring and Changing

Generally wealthier older people in families with the social and economic resources to make positive choices that improve already high satisfaction

**Participant 02**  
Ward Location  
**Central**



## Established and Attached

Comfortable and established in their neighbourhood, with a supportive community maintaining their high quality of life as they transition.

**Participant 10**  
Ward Location  
**South**

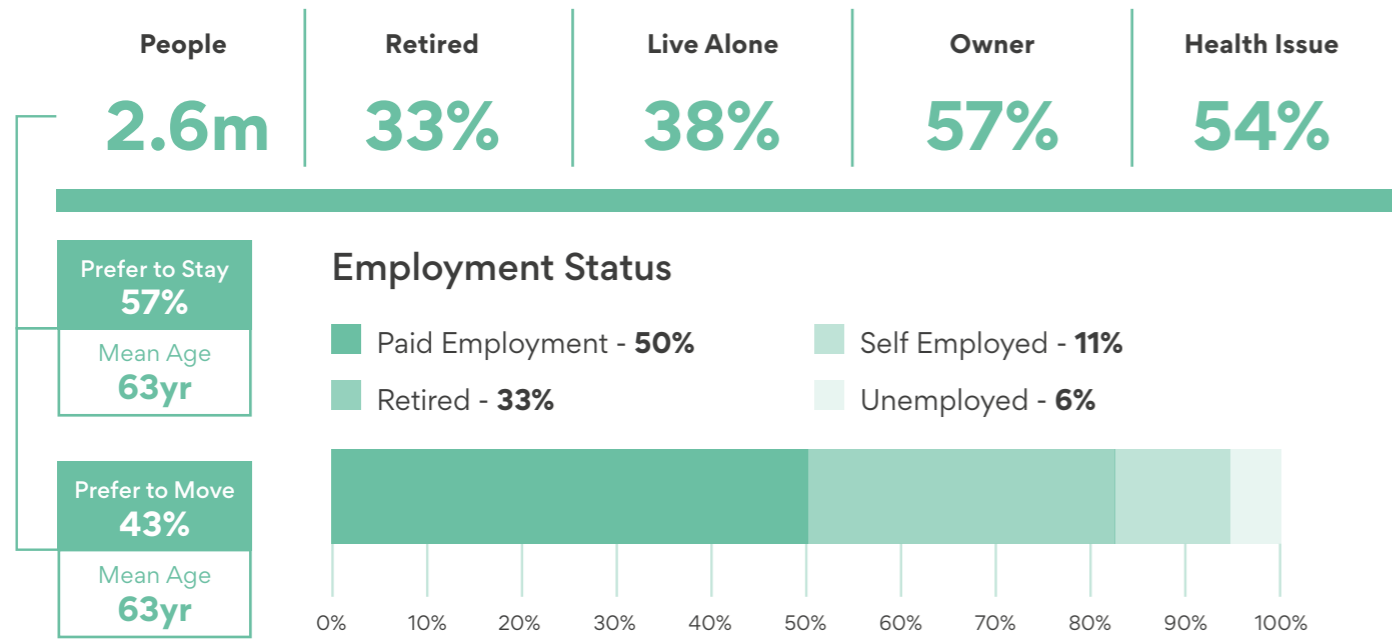




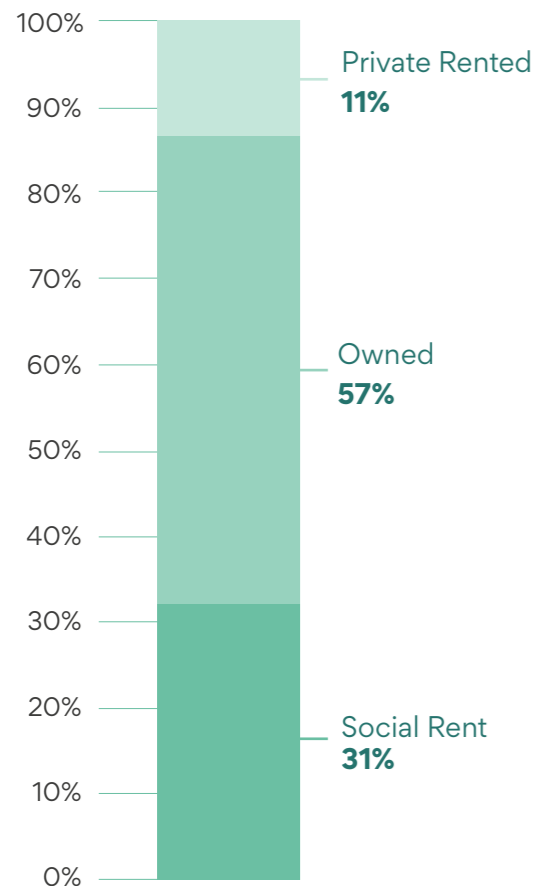
# Striving and Disconnected

Limited links to the community and lower level of satisfaction with neighbourhood. Fewer personal resources to enable improvement in their housing situation.

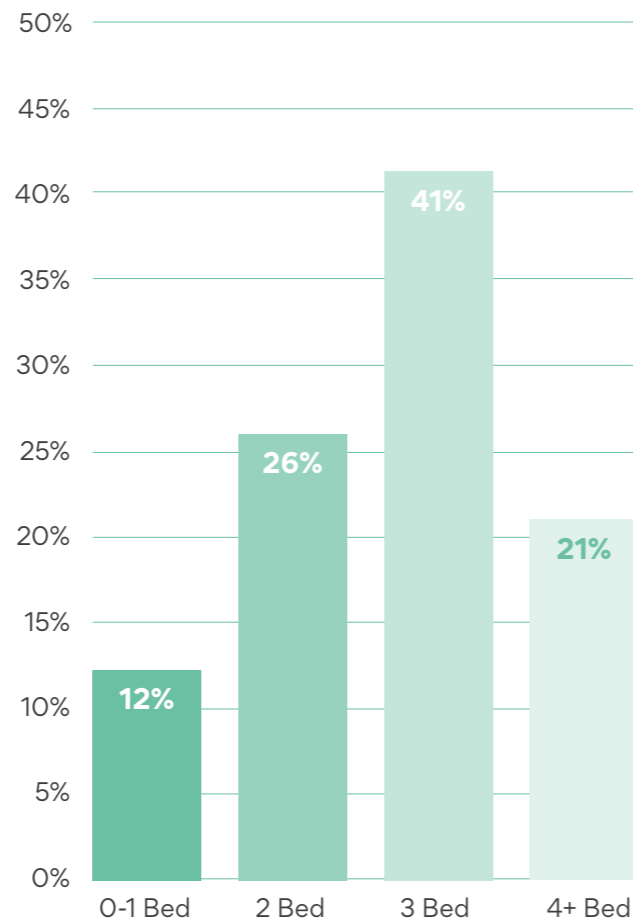
## Group Characteristics Summary



### Tenure Percentage



### Number of Bedrooms



We describe this group as 'Striving and Disconnected'. The individuals in this group have characteristics that suggest that they experience economic and social inequalities. This group includes high numbers of people who are living alone, have low incomes and have significant caring responsibilities. Members of this group are significantly more likely than other groups to report being dissatisfied with their life in general.

One of the unique characteristics of the group is their lack of social connections within their community. Members of this group are much less likely to regularly talk to neighbours, and less likely to have close friends living nearby. This is one of the key differences with group 3, who also face issues of health, income and social inequality but who have much stronger connections to their neighbours and community.

Unlike all other cohorts, members of Group 1 report high levels of dissatisfaction with their neighbourhood. They are significantly more likely to report that they dislike local shops and services, and they tend to have worries about crime in their neighbourhood. As a result, this group has by far the highest proportion of people who would prefer to move. However, this is still a minority of members within the group (43% of whom would prefer to stay).

### Potential Policy Responses

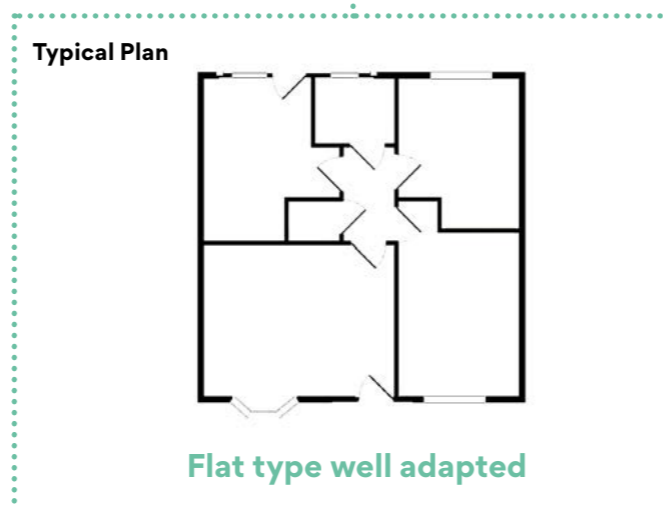
Solutions that rely on a for-profit commercial offer are unlikely to address the needs of this group, due to the low levels of personal resources that members have.

For homeowners in this group who want to move, low levels of home equity are likely to undermine any chance to move, either within their existing community or elsewhere. This highlights the importance of Housing Associations in driving an improvement in housing options for social tenants, and also those on low incomes from other tenures.

This group would particularly benefit from coordinated investments in community development and social infrastructure, which aim to support stronger social connections within a neighbourhood. These efforts would need to address the root cause of challenges faced by many people in group 1, such as crime or poor-quality services.

There is a high likelihood that homeowners and private renters in group 1 could be living in non-decent accommodation and will likely need financial support and advice to improve the condition of their home and to make any adaptations.

**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** 83  
**Employment:** Retired  
**Tenure:** Socially renting  
**Stay:** 17+yrs



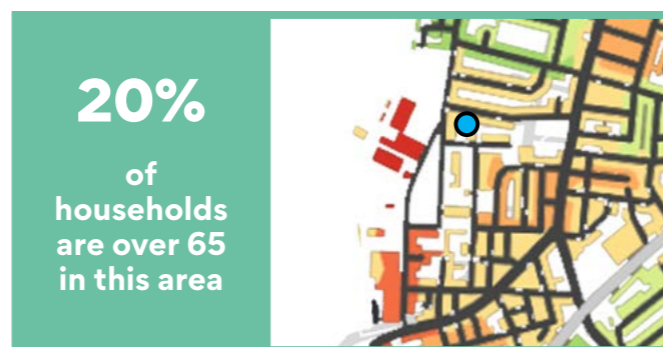
### Area Characteristics

- Mix tenure housing stock and much younger than the Reddish average
- Good access to local amenities
- Well connected to transport links
- Recent housing developments aimed at young professionals
- Very few of participant's house type in the area

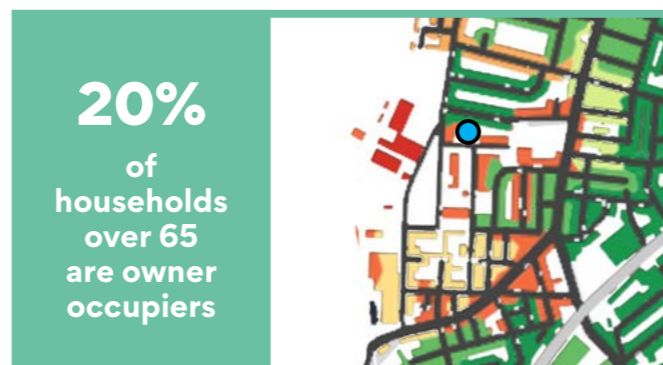
### Participant No. 22

- Much older than average in area
- Social rented accommodation
- Surrounded by owner occupiers
- Poor health
- Dependant partner
- Very low place attachment to neighbourhood
- Already moved to the best available option for circumstances
- Will need additional support in future

- **Disconnected from local community despite good location**
- **Already moved to the best available option**
- **Needs improved community offer**



Less than 14% of households over 65



## Tenure Specific Policy Responses

### Homeowners

Policy responses for homeowners should include providing ethical equity loan services. These could be used to secure home adaptations and support services for maintenance, shopping or gardening. These might be funded by ethical investors or through section 106 contributions (also known as planning obligations), local authority prudential borrowing, the New Homes Bonus or health and social care 'invest to save' programmes.

'Slider tenure' products, where residents can alter tenure and location when it suits, could convert homeowners to leaseholders. This could enable them to move using their capital stake to (for example) Older Person Shared Ownership properties, at a later date of the resident's choice.

For low-income homeowners, changes to allocations policy could enable Housing Associations to purchase homes from the open market - likely to be lower value - and make any necessary improvements (through 'purchase and repair' programmes). The home could then be rented to a family on their waiting list, as well as supporting the individual into social housing.

### Social Tenants

Social tenants in this group living in unsuitable housing would benefit from the possibility of priority housing transfers, through a change to the allocations scheme.

A kite mark standard for social landlords could be introduced to promote and celebrate high quality support for older households. These standards could promote dementia friendly services, safeguarding training, and offer enhanced services for repair.

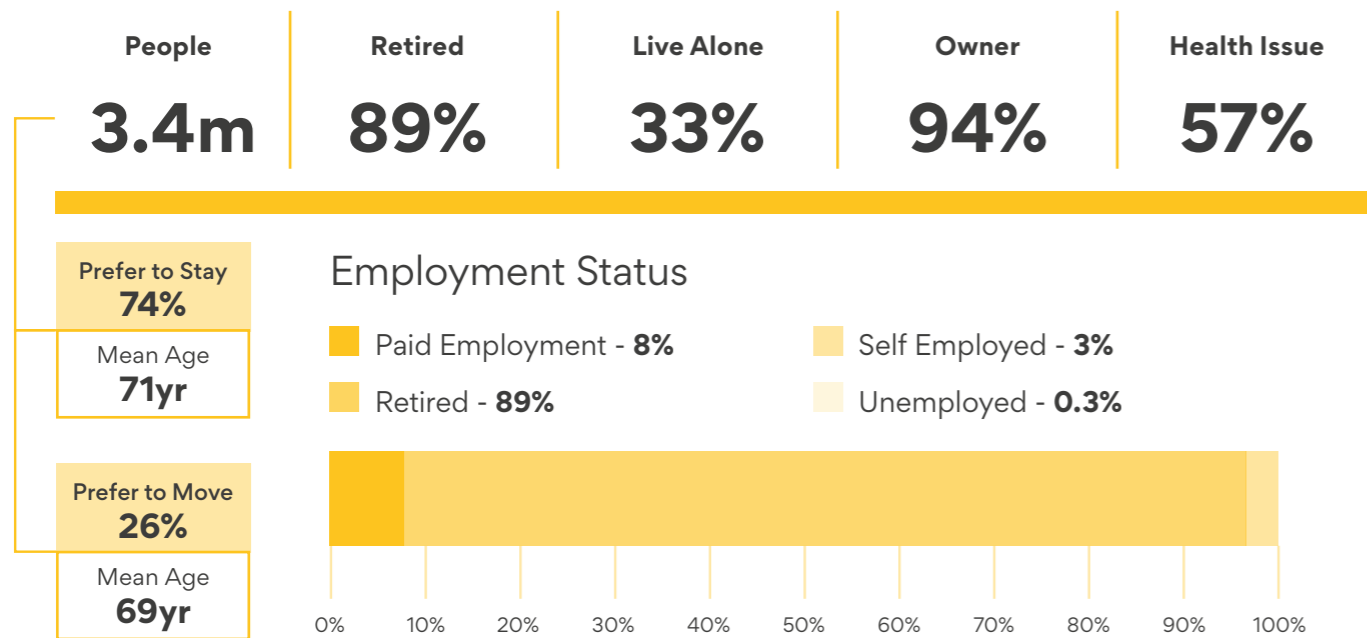
Extending existing mutual exchange schemes for house swapping could be promoted or extended to group 1, to enable better opportunities to move neighbourhood. Financial support could be included.

### Private Rental

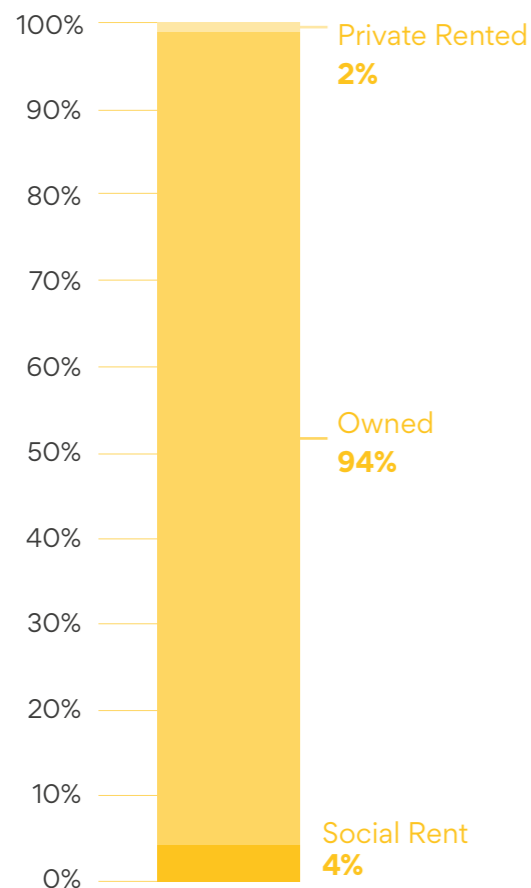
Private renters would benefit from improved support with gaining access to better quality private rented accommodation, for example, through the 'Bond Board' who provide support with finance and housing rights advice. Introducing a kite mark quality standard for PRS renting to older households could improve the quality of private accommodation services. These standards could promote dementia friendly services, safeguarding training, and offer enhanced services for repair.



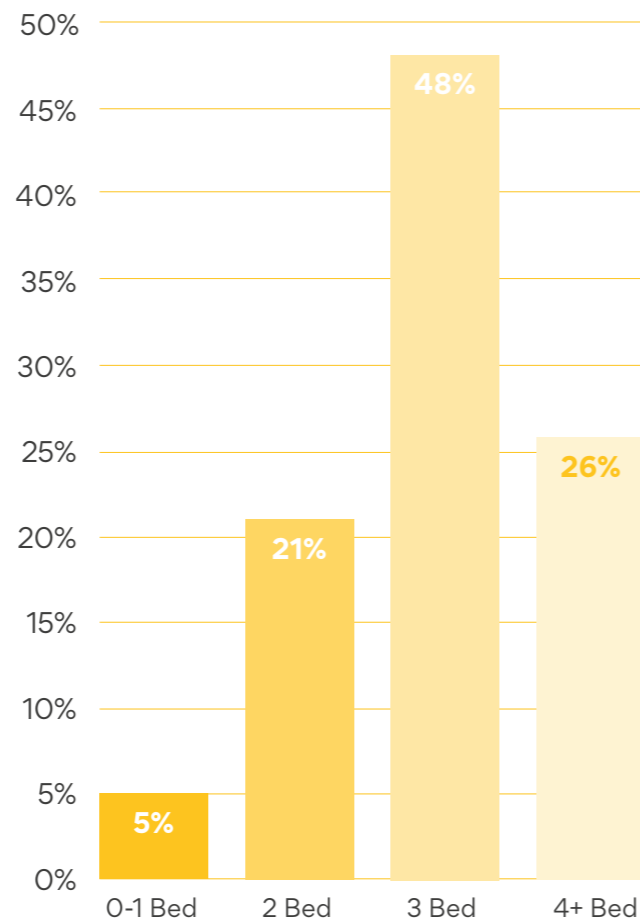
Neither wealthy nor poor, with moderate levels of satisfaction with their life. This group despite being older on average, has a relatively high preference for moving.



**Tenure Percentage**



**Number of Bedrooms**



Group 2 are situated on the midpoint in terms of characteristics used to create the five groups. They have moderate incomes, access to cars and participation in social groups, which suggests that they have the means to live comfortably. This is reinforced by the group reporting a good level of satisfaction with their neighbourhoods, and with their lives in general.

This group is almost equally split between homeowners and social tenants, with very few private renters. Only group 5 has a higher percentage of retirees.

Despite no obvious characteristics that suggest dissatisfaction, the group report the second highest preference to move home. As a result, we are describing this group as ‘Stable and Discontent’.

This group requires further investigation, but we can begin to suggest two hypotheses, which might be true for different older people within the group. The first is that the desire to move is driven by the preference to protect their existing quality of life, which they recognise as comfortable, if less than ideal.

The group has relatively poor health and may lack the financial or social assets that would give them the resilience to remain in their home as their needs change, so they may be keen to make proactive moves into low-level specialist accommodation, such as bungalows, retirement communities or extra care housing.

An alternative hypothesis would be that the group’s moderate level of satisfaction makes them more amenable to change, and they are perhaps looking for new experiences or environments that could offer them something more as they age, such as moving to a new location (country, coastal or urban).

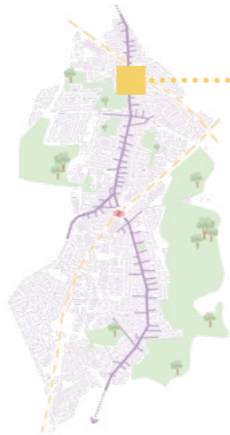
Even for the 76% of this group who prefer to stay, the underlying dynamics could provide insight into how to best support them to age and live comfortably within their existing neighbourhoods.

**Potential Policy Responses**

The uncertainty of this group makes policy recommendations challenging. There is a need to further investigate the dynamics within this cohort and what can be done to better support them. Since this group are generally satisfied, they could be the most amenable to efforts directed to increasing satisfaction within their existing neighbourhood.

# G2 Stable and Discontent

**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** 73  
**Employment:** Retired  
**Tenure:** Owner  
**Stay:** 15+yrs



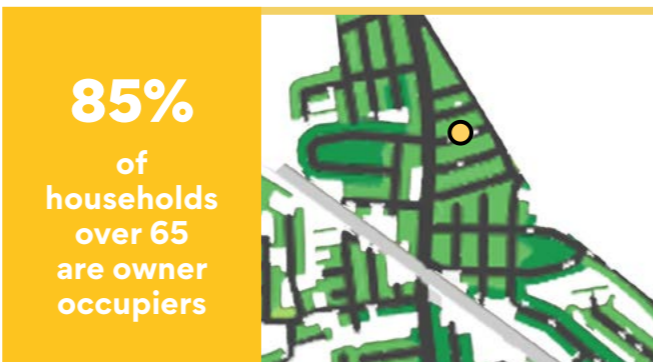
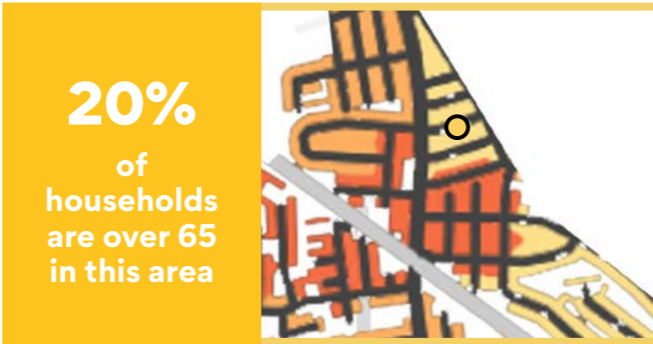
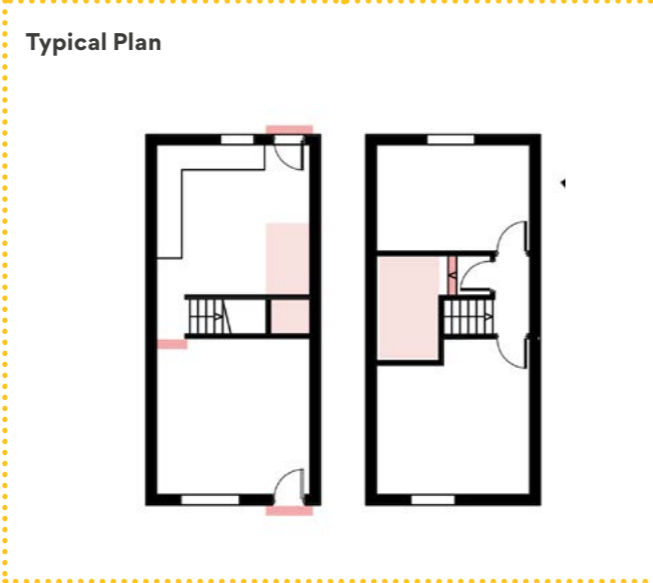
### Area Characteristics

- Fair access to local amenities
- Well connected to transport links
- Very common house type in the area
- Mix of tenures and ages in area

### Participant No. 20

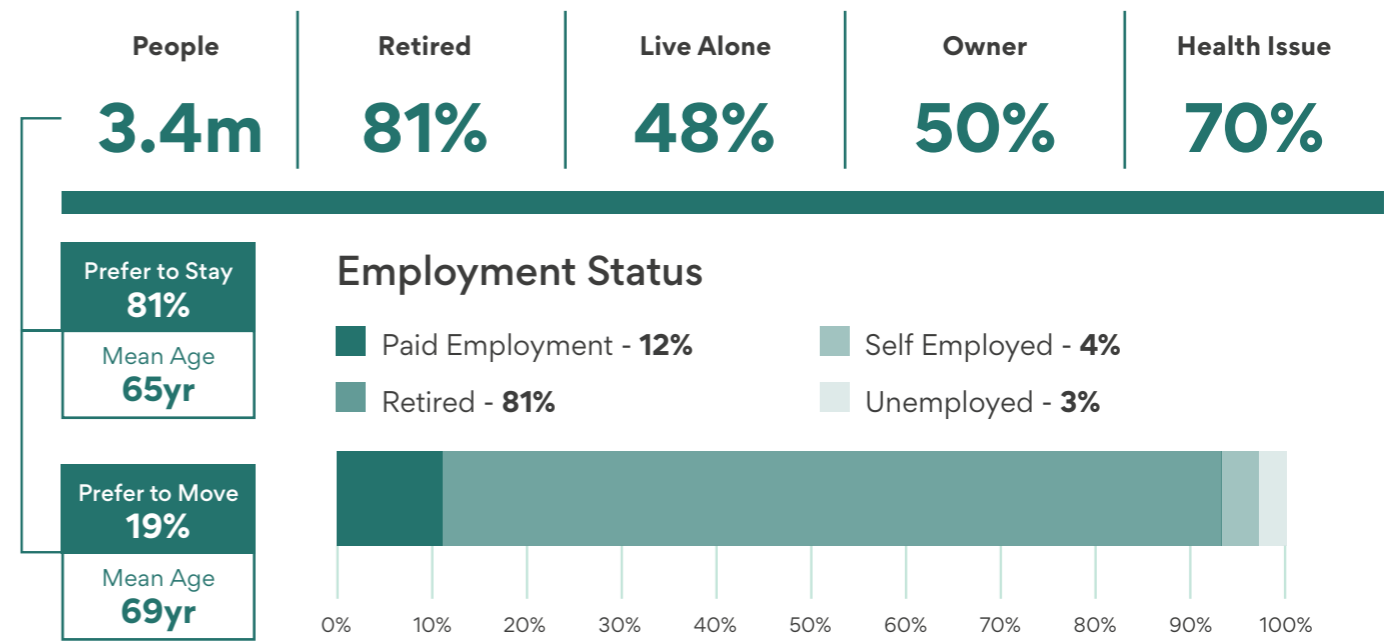
- Close to mean age for this group
- Partner has local family, was born in Reddish and has a high attachment to the area
- Participant is not strongly attached but does have local friends
- Local leisure and medical facilities poor
- Would have preferred to move
- Fair health, partner has mobility issues
- Made minor adaptations to bathroom
- Considering stair / through the floor lifts
- Would move to a bungalow as needed, but would not be able to afford it in the local area
- Does not have a car, which would make it difficult to find somewhere

- **Embedded but dissatisfied with community**
- **Able to accommodate changing needs in existing home**
- **Additional options required in locality and improved community offer**

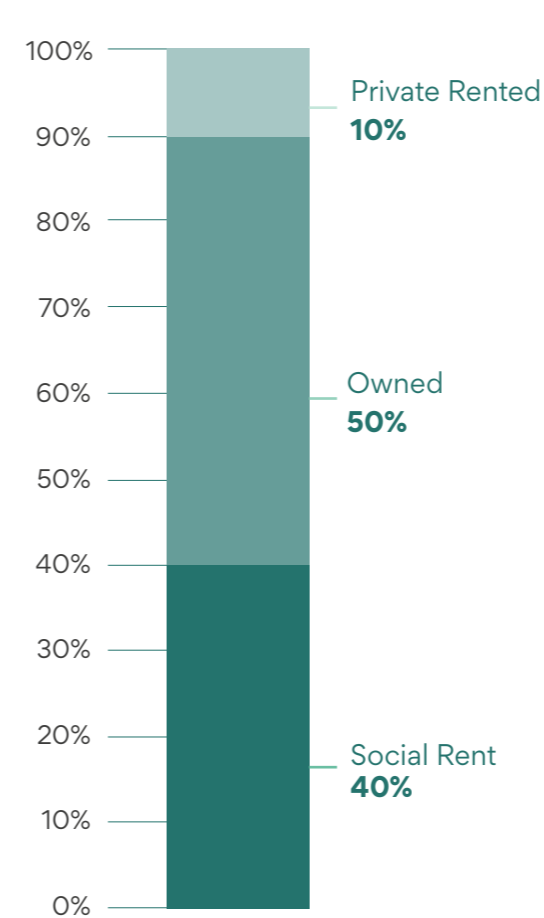


# G3 Struggling and Embedded

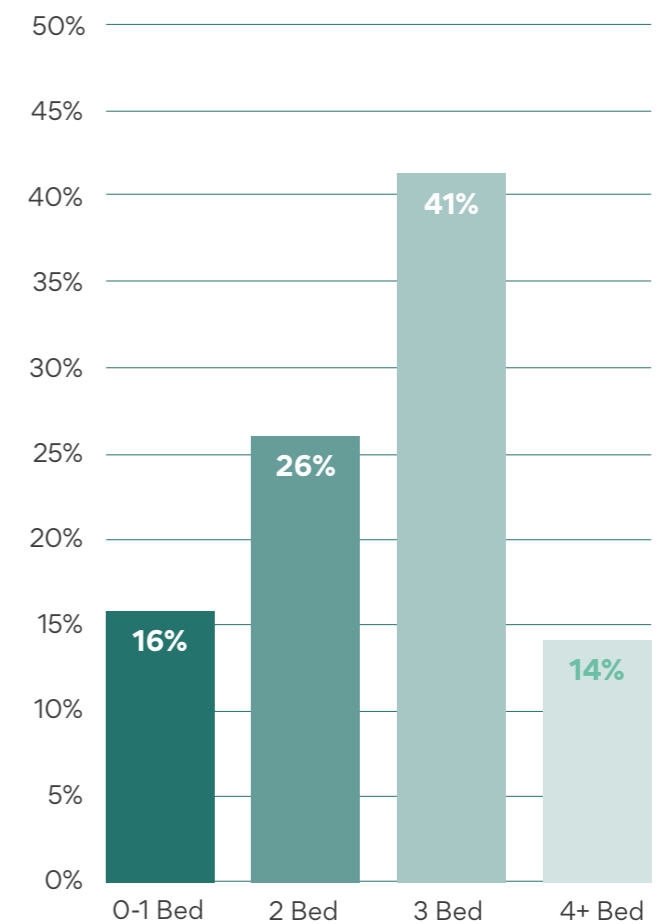
Experiencing significant health and income inequalities, but high satisfaction with their neighbourhood and the social connections they have created there.



### Tenure Percentage



### Number of Bedrooms





# Group Characteristics Summary

Group 2 consists of older people whose experience exhibits several characteristics that could make their lives challenging, but whose connections within their neighbourhood and community seem to provide some resilience against the inequalities they face. We describe this group as ‘Struggling and Embedded’.

Like Group 1, members of this group are more likely to be living alone, in rental accommodation and be on a low income. The group experience the highest levels of poor health, compounded by the lowest level of car ownership, suggesting potential issues with mobility. This group are also the most digitally excluded, with the lowest levels of internet access of the five groups. Despite this, the group are much more satisfied with their neighbourhood, and have a significantly lower desire to move home than those in Group 1.

This group contain far more social tenants than Group 1 and there is an expectation that they may receive greater support from their landlords and more coherent services within their neighbourhood than the more mixed tenure experience of Group 1. This group also includes significantly higher numbers of retirees, suggesting that they may have greater social availability to build local connections than Group 1.

One of the significant differences between this group and groups 1 and 2 is the strength of social networks that group 3 have within their direct surroundings. Members of this group are likely to report that their best friends live nearby, and that they talk regularly with neighbours. This social attachment to their community appears to be significant, as the proportion of this group who would prefer to move home is considerably lower than Group 1, despite their many other similarities.

The importance of neighbourly interactions suggests that supporting people on low incomes to make their homes accessible, safe and well maintained would play a significant role in supporting this group. There is a high likelihood that homeowners in Group 2 could be living in non-decent accommodation and may struggle to adapt their own home.

## Potential Policy Responses

While 43% of Group 2 live in properties with two or fewer bedrooms (the most of any group), a significant number live in larger homes with a strong desire to remain in their community. Policy responses should explore the assumption that access to affordable and attractive housing options in their local neighbourhood, and the financial costs of moving, are likely barriers to rightsizing for this group.

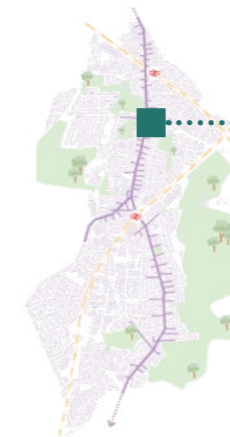
Addressing the issue of non-decent homes will require a cross-tenure palette of approaches. This could include regular home assessments and investments from Housing Associations, well-funded and preventative Home Improvement Agencies for low-income homeowners, and robust tenant charters and landlord registers to ensure those in private rental have the right to suitable accommodation.

This could include support for developments that offer shared ownership or innovative financial models for low-income older people, with priority given to residents already living in the immediate vicinity.



# Struggling and Embedded

Experiencing significant health and income inequalities, but high satisfaction with their neighbourhood and the social connections they have created there.



**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** 63  
**Employment:** Unemployed  
**Tenure:** Socially renting  
**Stay:** 40+yrs



Property type  
**1900's Victorian Terrace**

## Area Characteristics

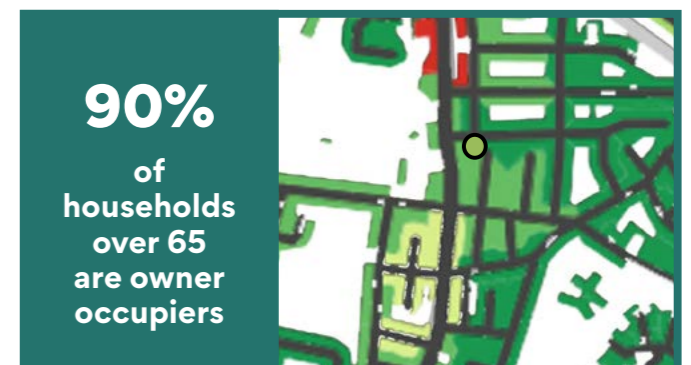
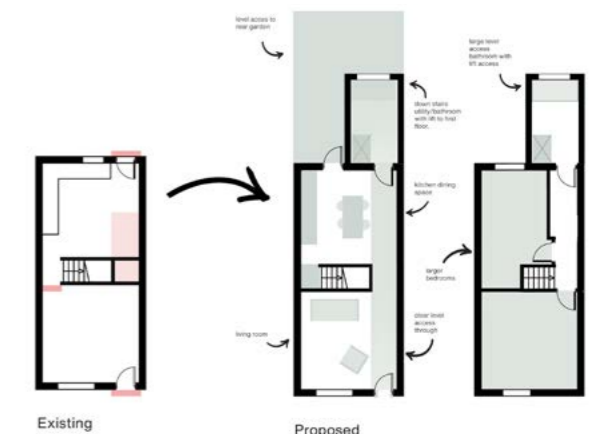
- High numbers of homes owned by people over 65
- Good access to local amenities
- Well connected to transport links
- Very common house type in area

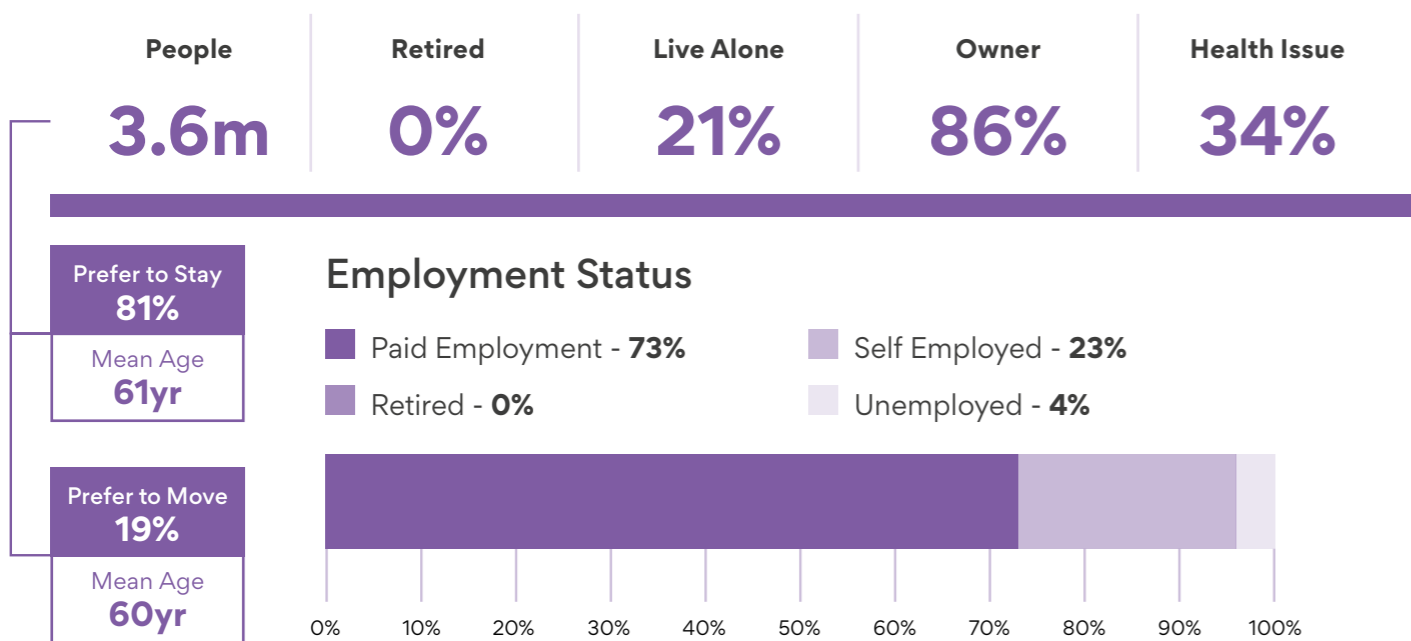
## Participant No. 03

- Lots of friends in the area, not many outside the area
- Lives with sibling
- Doesn't own a car
- Travels by bus to the supermarket for shopping
- Thinks the local leisure offer is poor
- Is in poor health and is unemployed
- In the future, the participant would like their house to be adapted, or for a more

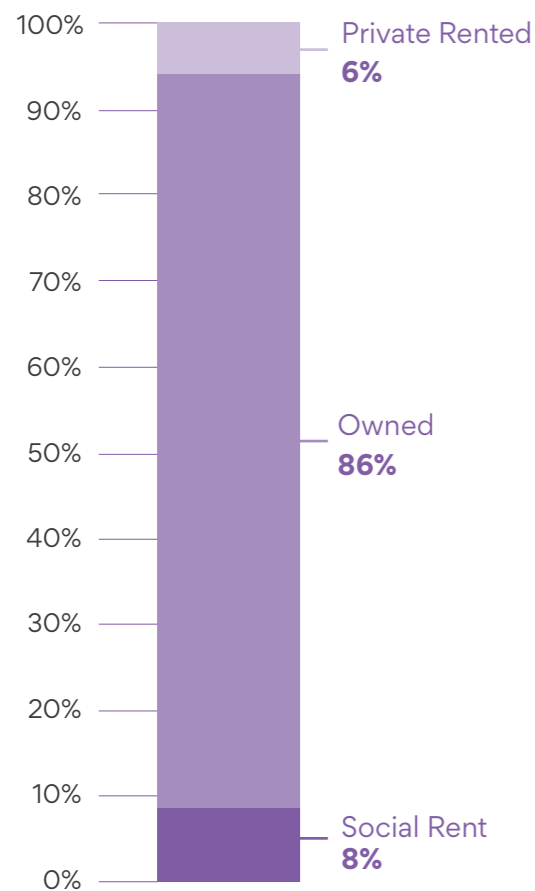
- **Strongly connected to local community**
- **Would like to stay in the area**
- **Housing adaptations will be required as alternative accommodation unlikely to be available within area**

## Home Adaptations

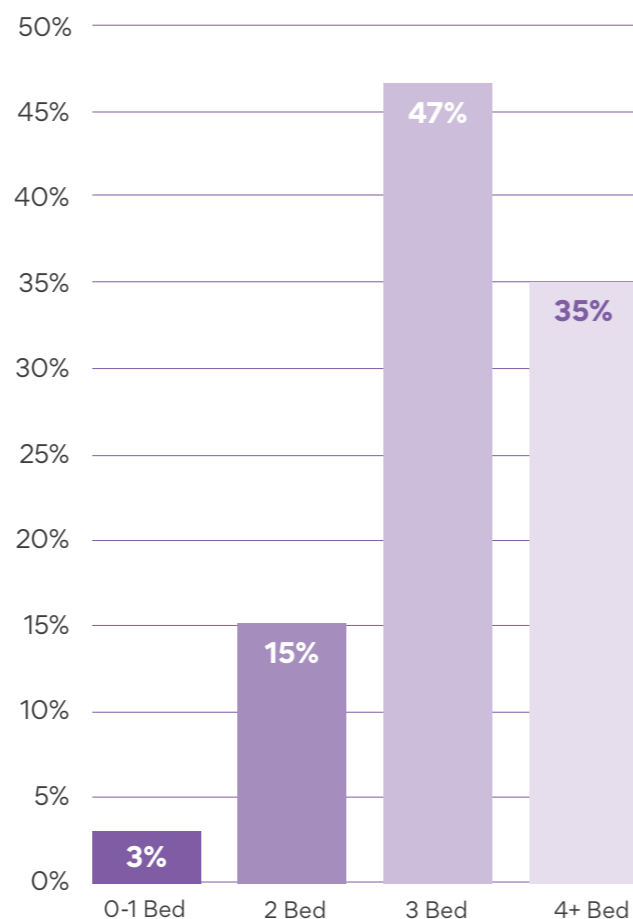




### Tenure Percentage



### Number of Bedrooms



Group 4 are the youngest and wealthiest of the five groups. Their positive feeling about their life and their neighbourhood are counter-intuitively matched by a considerable number who would prefer to move home. As a cohort they are most likely to be part of a family household, and to be in employment. This suggests that this group has members whose lives are changing, and who are seeking to use their resources to position themselves on a positive trajectory as they reach retirement. We describe this group as 'Aspiring and Changing'.

The group show some strong connections with their local areas, including high levels of participation in local social groups and a high likelihood to be a volunteer. Unlike the oldest groups in our study, Group 4 are slightly less likely to report that their close friends live nearby, or that they regularly talk with their neighbours. This perhaps suggests that family and work relationships are still the basis of their social lives.

Most of the group are homeowners and car owners, which alongside high incomes, suggests a level of financial security. The majority of this group live in large properties in urban areas, with 82% living in homes with three or more bedrooms. They report high levels of satisfaction with their lives, health and neighbourhood.

This group has significant numbers who are in paid employment and have high levels of satisfaction with their home, neighbourhood and health, suggesting that remaining in employment is more a positive lifestyle choice rather than a necessity.

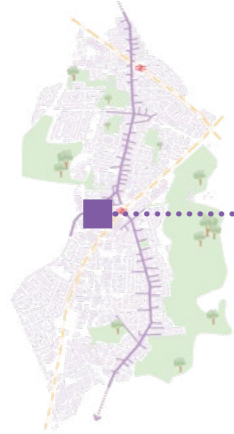
The proportion of the group who wish to move home is significantly higher than the other wealthier group (Group 5), which suggests more opportunity for policy to support people to rightsize.

### Potential Policy Responses

As the youngest of the five groups, policy responses should focus on supporting the development of housing options that meet the changing needs of future generations of older people. Policy should also look at encouraging people in mid-life to consider how to take proactive steps to ensure that they can age in place, either through renovation or moving home. Social tenants in this groups would be best assisted by an 'improve or move' approach.



**Gender:** Male  
**Age:** 79  
**Employment:** Working  
**Tenure:** Socially renting  
**Stay:** 30+yrs



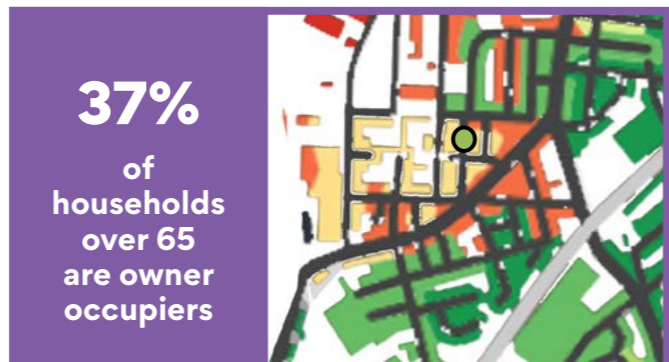
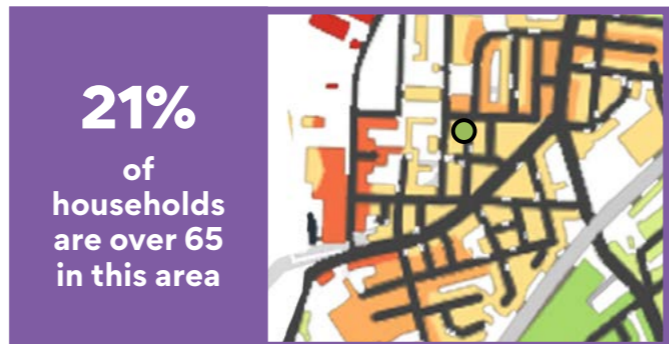
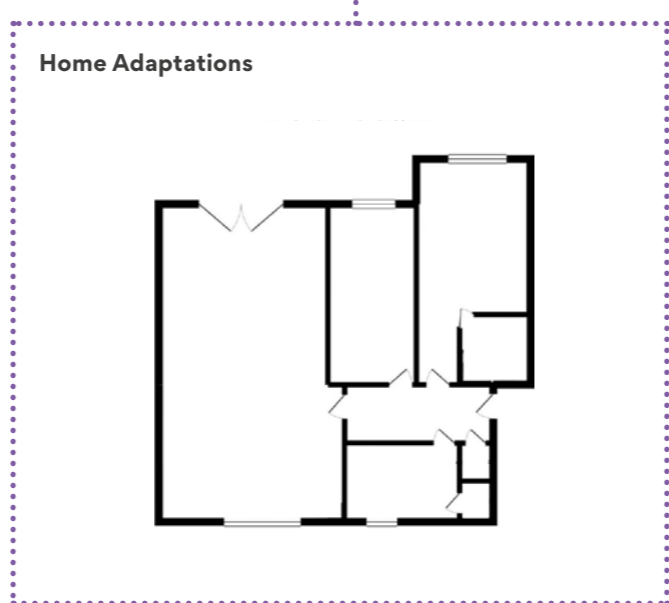
### Area Characteristics

- Close to local amenities, well connected to transport links
- A number of the same house type in the area
- Mixed tenure housing stock and area much younger than average

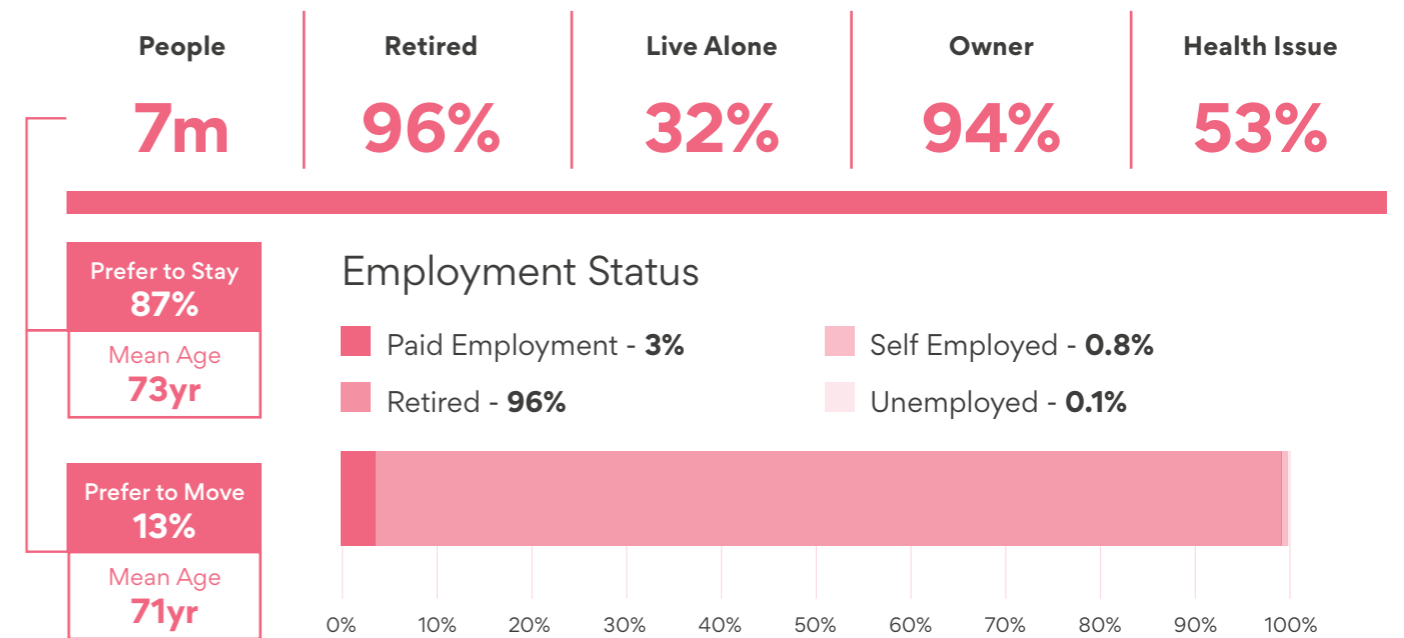
### Participant No. 02

- Much older than average for this group
- Good health
- Feels like they are doing well financially
- Is still in employment
- Dependent partner
- Highly attached to area
- Has lots of friends in the local area, friends outside the area
- Ramp up to the first floor and room for a stair lift inside and a downstairs W.C.
- Potential downsize was proposed through conversations with local Housing Association
- Ground floor flats below are only 1 bed, needs at least two beds due to their partner's health
- Doesn't want to move from house or area
- Would like a small garden for dog

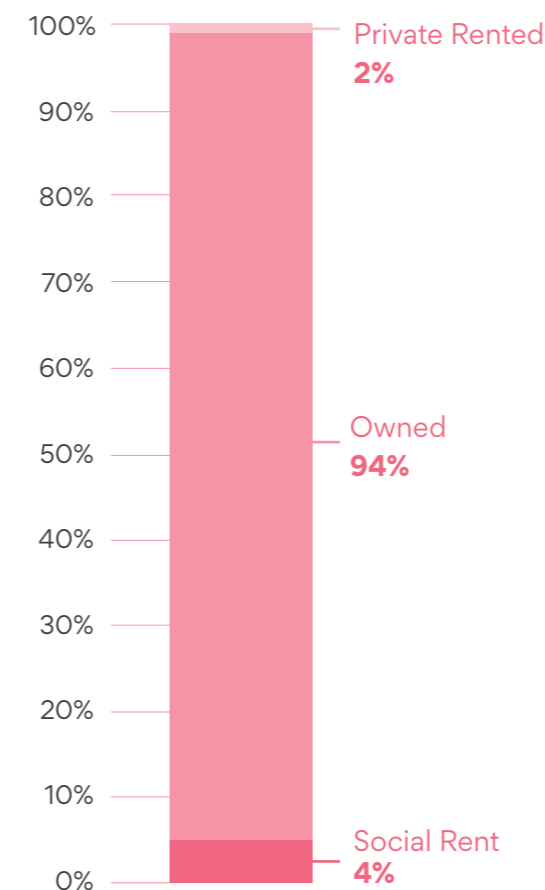
- Strongly connected to local community
- Relatively well off due to employment
- Needs at least a two bedroom alternative or adaptations



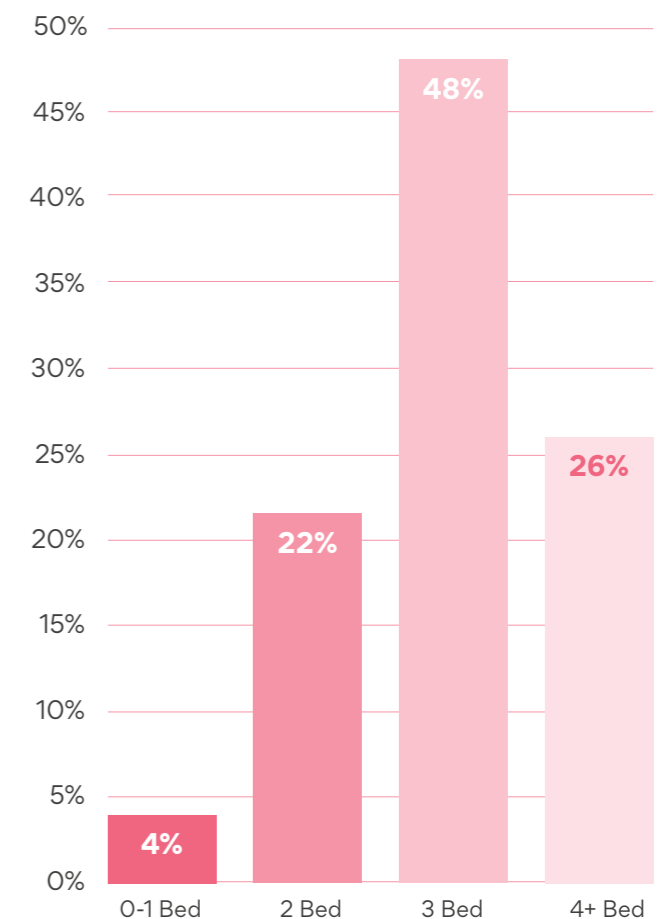
Comfortable and established in their neighbourhood, with a supportive community maintaining their high quality of life as they transition.



### Tenure Percentage



### Number of Bedrooms



# Group Characteristics Summary

With 7 million members, Group 5 is by far the largest of the five groups. It represents a cohort who report significant attachment to their neighbourhood and a high quality of life. They are supported by high levels of income and the social connections necessary to support them to age in place as they grow older. As a result, they are the group who are least likely to report a desire to move home. The group show no desire to 'downsize' with nearly three quarters of the group living in larger homes with three or more bedrooms. We describe this group as 'Established and Attached'.

The group is the oldest of the five groups, and can be characterised as being on the cusp of the 'fourth age' – community at a younger stage of a period where functional decline can begin to impact the personal fulfilment afforded after retirement. People in this group are likely to be in poor health (objectively), but notably, are more likely to report satisfaction with their health status (subjectively). This suggests that poor health isn't limiting the quality of life of many people in this cohort; implying they have the social and financial support necessary to overcome low or medium levels of physical impairment.

Group 5 report the highest levels of satisfaction with their neighbourhood out of the five groups, and one of the defining qualities of this group is how embedded they are in their community. Members of this group are the most likely to be part of social and community groups. These qualities are similar to Group 4, but there are differences which may explain the lower desire of people within Group 5 to move. People in Group 5 are, on average, 11 years older than Group 4, and are more likely to be living alone or widowed.

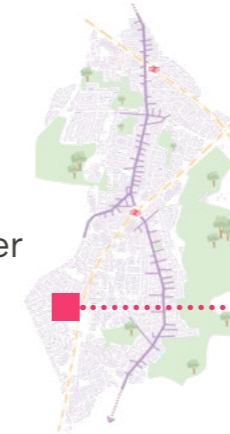
The increased embeddedness and desire to remain in a home or community could be determined simply by members having spent more time building connections, or the increased importance of friends and neighbours, as children leave home or partners pass away. It seems likely that many people in Group 4 will transition into Group 5 as they get older, particularly those who have already expressed a desire to stay in their life.

## Potential Policy Responses

The high levels of satisfaction in this group, and their financial means to support themselves, means that policy measures should focus on guidance rather than direct intervention. Initiatives such as 'Trusted Trader' and advice services give homeowners confidence to pursue renovations to their properties. Publicising best practice helps drive consumer demand for preventative improvements to their homes, that would facilitate the groups' desire to grow older in their current location.

# G5 Established and Attached

**Gender:** Female  
**Age:** 75  
**Employment:** Retired  
**Tenure:** Owner Occupier  
**Stay:** 40+yrs



**Property type**  
 1930's  
 3 bed  
 Semi



## Area Characteristics

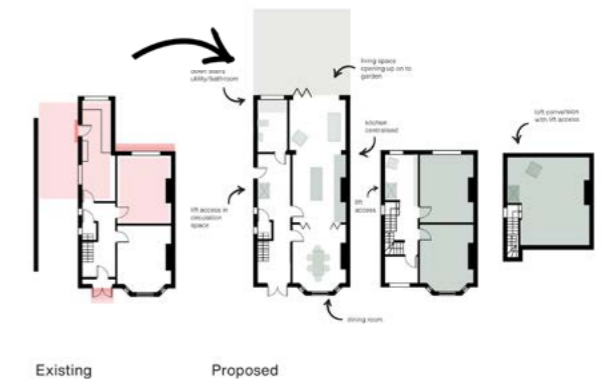
- Close to local amenities
- Well connected to transport links
- Very common house type in the area
- Older people are almost all owner occupiers

## Participant No.10

- Comfortable financially
- Highly connected to the community
- Participant has extensively modified house, including a downstairs W.C
- Would do more work to the house, but is worried about funding if their partner passes away
- Would consider moving into the assisted care home in Reddish
- Participant likes the idea of a big family making the best use of their home, rather than remaining there alone
- Thinks that assisted living homes are great, if with friends
- Would be tempted by a bungalow but worried they may be lonely

- **Strongly connected to local community**
- **Able to accommodate change in current property or consider alternatives in locality**
- **Additional age-friendly options would be attractive**

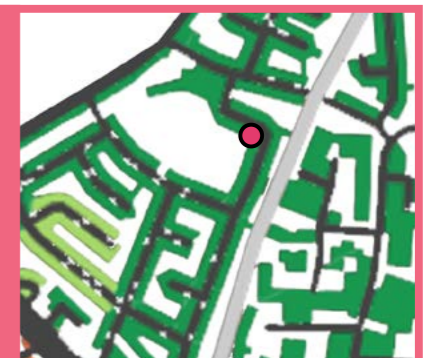
## Home Adaptations



**26%**  
 of  
 households  
 are over 65  
 in this area



**94%**  
 of  
 households  
 over 65  
 are owner  
 occupiers  
 in this area





# Group Findings Summary

	KEY CHARACTERISTICS	RIGHTSIZING BARRIERS	POTENTIAL POLICY RESPONSES
<b>G1 Striving and Disconnected</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly negative experience of place</li> <li>• Relative lack of financial or physical resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access to affordable alternative accommodation outside of local area</li> <li>• Cost of moving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase supply of affordable</li> <li>• Improve the social and social housing in more environmental conditions desirable areas of the local area through</li> <li>• Provide financial support to community initiatives such as enable moves age-friendly neighbourhoods</li> </ul>
<b>G2 Stable and Discontent</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mostly negative experience of place</li> <li>• Good access to financial and physical resources</li> <li>• Some dissatisfaction</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available options offer marginal improvement on relatively comfortable situation</li> <li>• Moving too challenging</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further targeted options</li> <li>• Recognition work for younger ageing in place resources segment of this group including finance options</li> </ul>
<b>G3 Struggling and Embedded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong positive experience of place</li> <li>• Relative lack of financial or physical resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of access to affordable alternative accommodation in local area</li> <li>• Cost of moving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide access to affordable social housing in local area which enables rightsizing not downsizing</li> <li>• Support community involvement in the local area</li> <li>• Provide financial support to enable moving for home owners</li> <li>• Increase resources supporting independent ageing in place</li> </ul>
<b>G4 Aspiring and Changing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong positive experience of place</li> <li>• Relatively good access to financial and physical resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of alternative accommodation within the local area</li> <li>• May be attracted to other, more desirable areas, when not tied to work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase supply of private</li> <li>• Improved signposting to age friendly housing in local ageing in place resources area including finance options</li> <li>• Further explore preferences of younger segment</li> </ul>
<b>G5 Established and Attached</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong positive experience of place</li> <li>• Relatively high resources</li> <li>• Most are retired, own home, no mortgage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of available options supporting lifestyle moves within the area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase supply of private</li> <li>• Improved signposting to age friendly housing in local ageing in place resources area including finance options</li> </ul>

## Finding the rightplace: Step by Step

This section establishes a step-by-step model to support the development of local strategies for rightsizing, using case studies from Reddish, Stockport as examples. The step-by-step guides on the following pages, using the two case studies – ‘Jim’ and ‘Mary’, from Reddish- as examples, show the potential of the ‘rightplace’ model to support the development of local strategies for rightsizing.

Categorical analysis of national data provides additional evidence for policy makers to consider policy from the perspectives of different groups of older people. These data sets can then be connected with geolocated data, specific environmental context, and lived experience, to provide place, and person, specific information about housing choices for older people.

The RightPlace process can be repeated to cover more neighbourhoods and identify groups within these, in order to create an overall picture of the ward. Many of the data analysis activities are possible to automate for Local Authority intelligence teams and the level of direct engagement of participants can be tailored according to resources available. The group membership survey can be extended to increase coverage. Group 1 is an example where it is expected that participants may be harder to reach. In this case, targeted engagement work may be required.

### Case study: Participant 22 - ‘Jim’ G1 - Struggling and Disconnected, Reddish East Central

G1

**‘Jim’ has low place-attachment and difficult financial and personal circumstances, including limited mobility for them and their partner.**

They are much older than the group average. Jim currently lives in accessible accommodation that was provided to support independent living within the last 10 years. Despite being in a central location with good local assets, Jim feels disconnected and is experiencing isolation, and their mobility issues make it difficult to access amenities.

Jim’s immediate neighbourhood has a lower number of older people than the UK average, and much lower than Stockport and Reddish. The tenure in the neighbourhood is mixed and there is a very small number of similar age restricted accommodation in the area. Based on our place-based research, it can be deduced that older people in this area who are not home owners will likely belong to Group 1 if they experience a disconnection to the local community, and Group 2 if they have a strong sense of belonging.

Positive moves for Jim and others in this group would be to move to similar accommodation in a more

desirable area, with additional support. Improving social connections through community initiatives such as age friendly neighbourhoods should be considered.

The majority of social tenants in the area are likely to be in Group 2, as participants overwhelmingly reported high levels of place attachment and had been residents in the area for 30+ years. As such, a relatively small number of older people in Reddish are likely to be in Group 1, and they are likely to be people experiencing ill health and limited mobility or other risks of social isolation.

### Case study:

G5

### Participant 18 - ‘Mary’ G5 - Established and Embedded, Reddish South East

**‘Mary’ reports very high place attachment, with feelings of pride about her community, and positive financial and personal circumstances.**

Mary has already had some adaptations made to their home, and would be able to further adapt it as required.

The area that Mary lives in is close to amenities, and she is able to access the wider neighbourhood of Reddish. The immediate area has an average number of older people for Reddish, and almost all are owner-occupiers, primarily occupying 3-bedroom semi-detached houses from the 1930’s.

Older people in this area of Reddish are, like Mary, highly likely to belong to group 5, and be home owners and retired (those who are still in employment will likely be in Group 4 - a key defining difference between these groups). It can be expected that almost all owner-occupiers in Reddish will belong to group 5.



# The Rightplace Model A Step-by-Step Guide

## Connecting **People...** and **Place...**

**Engage local residents, over 55, through workshops, surveys, and interviews.**



- A** Participants undertake the group membership survey in order to discover which group they belong to.
- B** Interview participants to understand their rightsizing issues. Explore their house type, experience of the neighbourhood, and how long they have lived in the area.
- C** Keep engaging with participants until representatives of all the groups have been identified.

**Undertake desktop studies and site visits to understand the neighbourhood.**

- A** Select a site area less than a whole ward.
- B** Use site visits and desktop studies to identify physical and social assets e.g. medical facilities, age friendly activities, and leisure.
- C** Map transportation and movement including train stations and bus routes alongside timetable data.
- D** Use census data to map where different groups of older people live including health, age, car ownership, and marital status.
- E** Use census data to identify different types of older people, mapping life stage of households, household tenure, and house types.

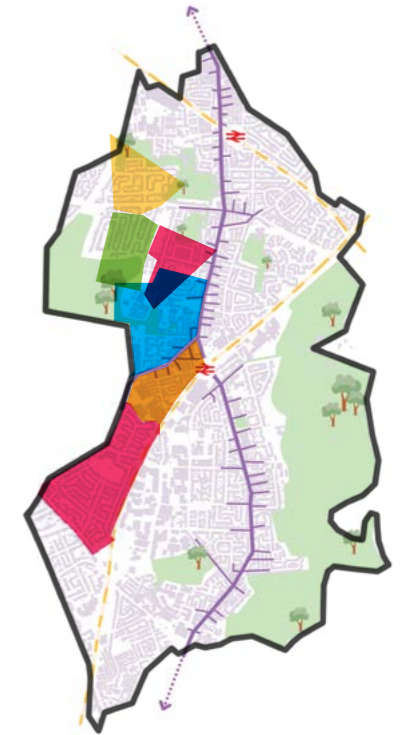


**Personal experience, correlated with objective neighbourhood context to identify rightsize gap for this group in this neighbourhood.**

## with **Policy.**

**Locate the group members within the site and describe their lived experience in place.**

- A** Select a group member within the neighbourhood to understand their experience in place.
- B** Define neighbourhood for each participant group bounded by 5 minute walking time.
- C** Relate neighbourhood to physical and social assets, and overlay house age and typology.
- D** Relate group member's experience to the census data maps to understand neighbourhood characteristics.
- E** Repeat to cover all neighbourhoods and groups found present.



**Apply policy to neighbourhood based upon group membership.**

# Connecting People... and Place...

**G1**

P22

**Striving and Disconnected**

Locate residents of each group within ward...

**14%**  
of households are over 65

**20%**  
of households over 65 are owner occupiers



Explore lived experience of home and neighbourhood...

Positive attachment to ground floor accessible flat but not to area



- Participant feels disconnected despite good local assets.
- Strongly connected to accessible home.
- Due to mobility is unable to access the nearby amenities.

Explore neighbourhood characteristics...

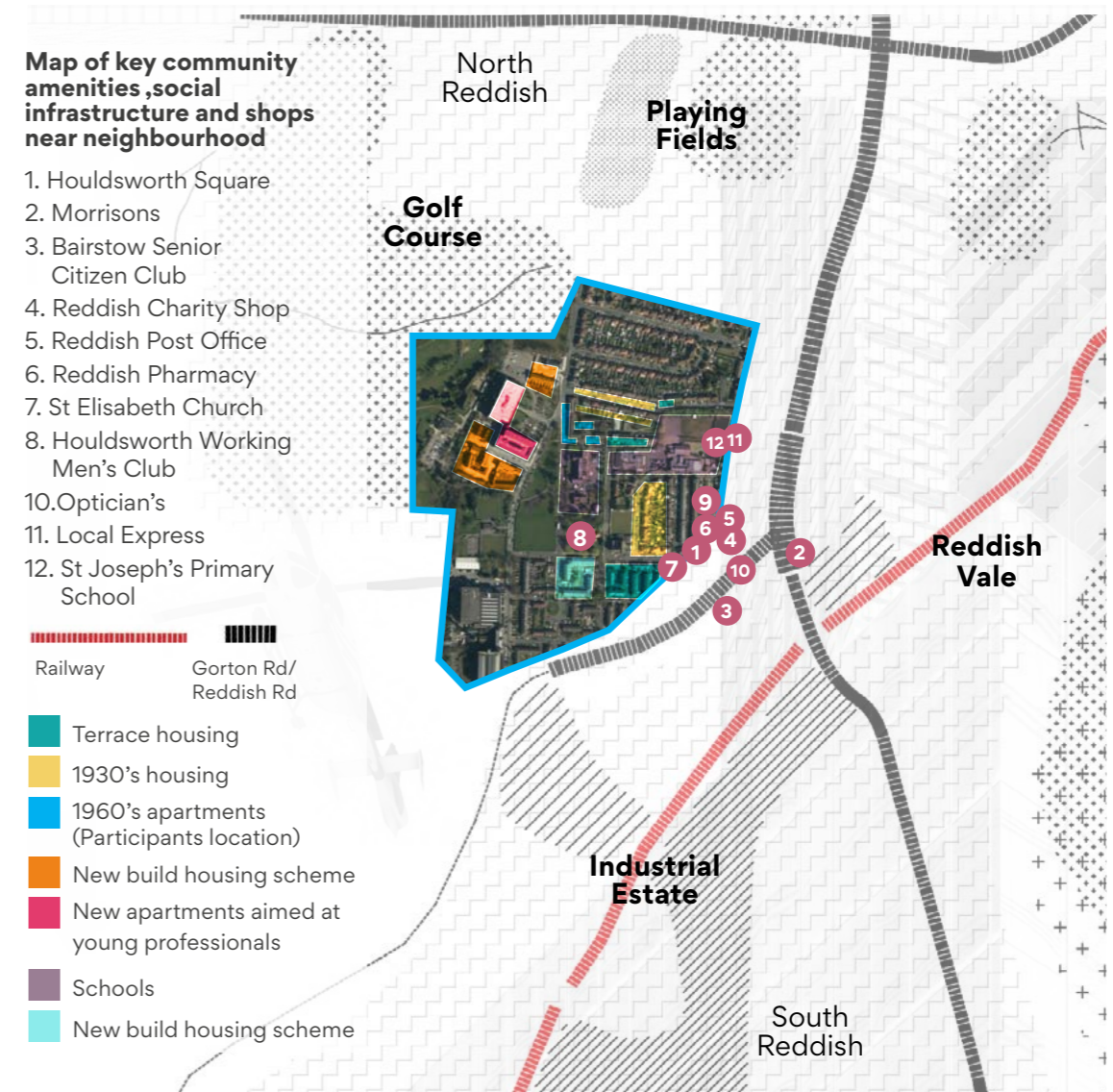
- Mixed tenure and age in the area much younger than the Reddish average.
- Good access to local amenities.
- Well connected to transport links.
- Recent housing developments aimed at young professionals.
- Very few of this house type in the area.

Personal experience, correlated with objective neighbourhood context to identify rightsize gap for this group in this neighbourhood.

# with Policy.

**G1** Reddish - Rightsizing responses

- Increase supply of affordable social housing in more desirable areas.
- Provide financial support to enable moves.
- Improve the social and environmental conditions of the local area through community initiatives such as age friendly neighbourhoods.



Neighbourhood determined by a 5 minute travel time isochrone



# Connecting People... and Place...

**G5**

**P10**

**Established and Attached**

Locate residents of each group within ward...

**26%**

of households are over 65

**94%**

of households over 65 are owner occupiers



Explore lived experience of home and neighbourhood...

Positive attachment to 1930s semi detached house and area



- Comfortable financially
- Has local pride and loves the community
- Already done some adaptations and an extension
- Able to further adapt their home as required

Explore neighbourhood characteristics...

- Close to local amenities
- Well connected to transport links
- Number of same house type in the area
- High percentage of owner occupiers over 65
- Area is bordered by an A road, B road and railway line

Personal experience, correlated with objective neighbourhood context to identify rightsize gap for this group in this neighbourhood.

# with Policy.

**G5**

**Reddish - Rightsizing responses**

- Increase supply of private age friendly housing in local area.
- Improved signposting to ageing in place resources including finance options.



Neighbourhood determined by a 5 minute travel time isochrone

# The Rightplace Model Summary



- The research outlined in this report confirms that there is a significant gap between the desires of older people, and the housing choices available to them.
- The evidence shows that it is a combination of social relationships, services, facilities and accommodation that define sense of the 'rightplace' to grow older.
- Older people are a diverse group with differing mental and physical capacities, experiences, interests and needs. They are active consumers, with individual needs and aspirations for their homes in later life, and they move for different reasons; some planned, some unplanned.

- Plans and housing strategies need to be more responsive to local and personal circumstances to improve housing choices for people aged 55 and over.
- The Rightplace model offers a new approach to understanding older peoples housing choices, and can be used to support the development of local strategies for rightsizing.

## Next Steps

Rightplace provides a fresh take on planning for older people, but it is only part of the solution. We need to further understand more about the barriers to age-friendly planning, using Rightplace as a starter for a larger programme of influencing national and local planning policy.

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

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The Centre for Ageing Better is pioneering ways to make ageing better a reality for everyone, including challenging ageism and building an Age-friendly Movement, creating Age-friendly Employment and Age-friendly Homes.

