



Setting Standards for
Retirement Communities



Vision 2030



Our mission

ARCO believes that meaningful, long-lasting partnerships and commitments are at the heart of solving the challenge of meeting the housing, care, and support needs of our ageing population.

We emphatically believe that older people ought to:

- Be treated with respect and dignity.
- Be valued for their contributions to society and to their communities.
- Have what they need to be happy and healthy, including access to good support, care, and health services.
- Be enabled and supported to live independently for as long as possible.
- Be empowered and free to make informed choices.

Our vision

We know that there is already huge unmet demand for more Retirement Communities to provide housing, support and care for older people in the UK.

With an ageing population, these demands will become more pronounced and we believe that the UK's health and social care systems need more of the unique support that Retirement Communities provide.

This sector has already been growing and currently provides Retirement Communities for 75,000 people. However, by international standards, our sector is still in its infancy.

Our ambition is for 250,000 people to have the opportunity to live in Retirement Communities by 2030.

Making this vision a reality will require a persistent focus on our customers and our services whilst increasing supply.



We will focus our attention on the following 10 key priority areas:



Sector-specific legislation

Currently, a patchwork of legislation governs the Retirement Community sector. Unlike in other countries, there is no sector-specific legislation that sets clear expectations for both residents and operators. In order to give statutory backing to new models of tenure, and provide certainty and consumer protection to 250,000 older people, sector-specific legislation will need to be introduced over the coming years. In this way, rather than being an additional burden on the sector, a smart 21st century system of regulation will play its part in ensuring a thriving sector and aspirational living environments for residents.



Enhanced health and wellbeing

People are living longer – 11.8 million people aged over 65 currently live in the UK, and the number of people aged over 75 is projected to double in the next 30 years. Unfortunately, healthy life expectancy has not kept up with life expectancy in general, meaning that older people in the UK increasingly live into old age with (potentially multiple) conditions which may impact on their independence and quality of life. Research has shown that Retirement Communities keep people healthy for longer, can reduce and even reverse frailty, and provide more effective and cost-efficient delivery of health and care, and we will be focusing on ways to increase these positive impacts.



A highly trained workforce

The Retirement Community sector is a people business, and research shows that resident satisfaction is highly correlated with the quality of staff on the ground. Ensuring consistently high levels of care, service and support is critical. We are working on the challenge of effectively recruiting, training and retaining this workforce. We also need to increase the profile of this exciting and rewarding sector, and the important roles in it which provide a massive social benefit. We will be developing workforce strategies and coordinated approaches to training and retention via the ARCO Academy.



Clarity in the planning system

The UK planning system fails to adequately consider the housing and care needs of our ageing population. The current approach also lacks consistency in how Retirement Communities are classified, planned for and delivered (as the element of care and support delivery is often overlooked). This needs to change, and any future expansion of the sector will require the planning system to be much more consistent and clear about the role of Retirement Communities, giving local authorities the support and guidance they need to meet local demand.



Comprehensive and robust data

Expanding the Retirement Community sector will require a robust evidence base – to drive operational excellence, demonstrate effectiveness, ensure accountability and transparency to residents and their families, and to underpin investment and funding decisions. We will collect, analyse and publish sector-specific information via ARCO Analytics, on our website and in regular reports, ensuring that decisions about where to live or whether to invest can be made based on robust data and information.



Sustainable funding streams

Our sector brings together housing, leisure as well as care and support services. Therefore, funding streams will by necessity be made up of a number of sources. In order to safeguard the expansion of the sector, it is vital that changes to funding, benefits, and legal arrangements are well balanced and do not have an adverse impact on residents' ability to move to and remain in Retirement Communities, or on operators' capacity to create sustainable business models and increase supply.



Intelligent use of technology

Technology will continue to change and improve our lives, and has the capacity to enhance the customer experience and drive operational performance. We will continue to engage with researchers, start-ups, and technological experts who harness the power of both mainstream and cutting edge design solutions, including artificial intelligence and robotics, in order to deliver a truly outstanding customer offer, improve care and services, and ultimately improve the quality of residents' lives.



A clear customer proposition

The Retirement Community sector offers a wide range of innovative solutions that address the housing, care and support needs of our ageing population. However, the range of terms used to describe the offer can be confusing for customers and stakeholders alike. For example, the absence of a clear definition makes it difficult for policymakers to come up with sector specific recommendations, while consumers struggle to locate Retirement Communities in the wider social care and housing landscape. The development of a clear and well-communicated customer proposition is therefore paramount for the expansion of the sector.



Effective self-regulation

In the absence of sector-specific legislation, ARCO members have made a commitment to abide by standards that go over and above what the (fragmented) legal framework for the sector stipulates. The ARCO Consumer Code, our Standards and Compliance Framework, and our assessment programme are designed to ensure a high-quality offer for customers and residents, through identifying issues before they occur. Consumers can have confidence that ARCO Approved Operators are committed to providing a quality service. Because it focuses on best practice and continually evolving higher standards, it is our view that self-regulation will complement (rather than be replaced by) sector-specific legislation once this is introduced.



Flexible models of tenure

The Retirement Community sector currently uses tenure models that were not designed for integrated service delivery. This means that a leisure, hospitality, care, support and housing offer is often wrapped up in a real estate contract, for example via the leasehold system. We believe we need to follow the lead of other countries with advanced Retirement Community markets in creating more flexible forms of tenure. This would allow for high levels of clarity regarding the rights and responsibilities of both residents and operators. It should give residents a clearer and enforceable set of rights, and would allow for the relationship between the operator and resident to evolve and be updated over time. It should also enable a more flexible approach that can be tailored to suit the needs of individual residents.

For further information, or to become a supporter of the Vision 2030, please visit www.arcouk.org

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