



London Housing Panel

Tonic: Meeting the housing needs of the older LGBT community

Tonic is a community-led housing association focused on creating vibrant, inclusive urban LGBT+ affirming retirement communities where people can share common experiences, find mutual support, and enjoy their later life.



TONIC

It is estimated that over 1 million LGBT+ people in the UK are over 50; 810,000 are over 65; of whom 145,000 live in London. The older population is expected to increase by 40% within the next 20 years.

There is currently no housing and related support for older LGBT+ people in the UK, yet there is compelling evidence as to why such provision is required. We know from research, that in addition to the issues of ageing, LGBT+ people, compared to the general population:

- have generally worse health outcomes,
- are more likely to live alone, be single and less likely to have children and family support,
- are less likely to feel a sense of belonging to their local community, and
- feel that their specific needs are not considered in their care.

'In 2011 Stonewall found that 45% of older LGB people experience discrimination while using social care services and that 73% of older LGB people express discomfort in disclosing their sexuality to care home staff.'

*'The 2017 No Place Like Home report revealed that only 43% LGBT*Q social housing residents felt a sense of belonging to their local area compared to 82% of all social housing residents and 26% of LGBT*Q social housing residents said they were always or mostly lonely where they live. Six out of ten trans residents say their neighbourhood isn't a safe place for them to live.'*

Tonic has recently undertaken more detailed housing demand research, with partners Opening Doors London and Stonewall Housing, to which 624 older LGBT+ Londoners participated, with 79% saying they required LGBT+ affirming or accredited housing with care, with only 1% saying they would find general provision acceptable.

Tonic will provide accommodation and safe social spaces where older LGBT+ people are supported, gain life-affirming social connections and access culturally-appropriate services. Our services will be actively affirming of the lives, histories, needs and desires of LGBT+ people. This does not imply exclusion of those who do not identify as LGBT+ but actively values those who respect and celebrate LGBT+ people.

Originally a community interest company, Tonic has set up Tonic Housing Association to be able to provide affordable housing. It is working in partnership with larger housing associations, and our first homes are planned to be available next year through an acquisition of apartments within a new-build extra care scheme. These properties will be available on a shared ownership basis, which will enable us to establish a community asset base for further projects. In future, Tonic intends to provide affordable rented homes, which will require registration by the Social Housing regulator.

Recognising that a 'one size fits all' approach does not meet the needs of diverse communities, Tonic co-produce to create truly community-led projects. Tonic Housing Association has a board comprising of members of the LGBT+ community aged 50+, and receives direct input on key decisions from our community panel of people who are looking to be future residents or who support potential future residents.



This is how we live our lives out