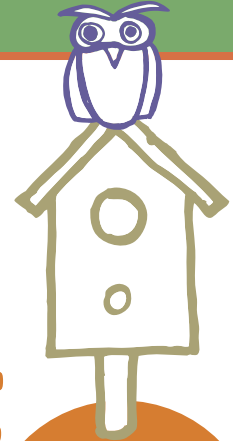


## HINTS AND TIPS

# Choosing the house that is right for you



**Falkirk  
Moving  
Assistance  
Project**

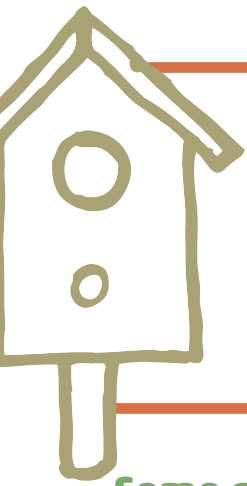
If you are at this stage you are thinking that moving may be right for you. Now you want to check out the options. There are 3 aspects to choosing a home:

- The right house and location.
- Links with any support you might need.
- Options around buying, renting or sharing your home.

This is one of a series of hints for older people at each stage of moving house.

- Do you want to move or stay?
- Choosing the house that's right for you.
- Reducing what you have.
- Making the move.
- Supporting your relative or friend.

They all connect with each other, and it doesn't matter where you start.



**Our most important advice is: This is about what is right for you. If other people are worried – family, friends or staff such as GPs and care workers – you should recognise this, as they may have a point. But it is your life and your decision. There almost certainly will be a way to have the home you want and stay safe and well.**

### **Some general tips**

- Remember that you don't need to do this on your own. There are people who will help you at every stage.
- Think about what things are important to you. Know what your priorities are.
- Make a list of things to ask or find out about – jot things down as you think of them.
- Take your time. Do it in small steps. You don't need to do it all at once.
- Sometimes it helps to have a plan and know what you are aiming for. Then you can think about each point and how that helps you achieve your plan.
- Other people don't make decisions that way. They just know when something is the right decision for them. Remember that's ok too. (But our checklists will still be useful.)
- Check out the options.
- Gather information from different sources if you can. If they all point to something being good (or bad) it probably is.
- Ask people who have been in your situation. Find out what they did and how it has worked for them. You don't have to follow their example but it will help you work out what is right for you.
- Talk to people. Ask family and friends and other people you know.
- Get specialist advice and information, especially for legal and financial things.
- If your choices affect other people, make sure you include them in your discussions and plans. And do it early on.
- Be willing to make compromises. If you know what is important to you it is much easier to compromise on things that don't matter so much.

- Try to think of the positive and exciting aspects of a change if you can. They are usually in there somewhere, even in difficult situations.
- Sometimes worrying about making the right decision or the best decision almost stops us making any decision. When that happens, start by making one change or decision. Getting something decided – even a small thing – can help with the rest.
- If it feels hard or upsetting, get out and get some fresh air if you can. Go away for the day, or an hour or two. Being somewhere different often gives us a fresh view on a problem.

**“My advice is to keep an open mind and be prepared to compromise.”**

## Finding the right house

These are some of the points older people have found it useful to think about.

### What and where?

- Detached, semi-detached, terrace, flat – don’t mind?
- Live in the country, village, or town?

### What are the basic things that you need in a new home?

- Number of rooms - do you need a spare room for anyone?
- Type of rooms to make it easy to manage now and over the next few years.
- Bathroom with a shower or bath? Do you need space for a wheelchair or help from carers?
- Separate toilet from bathroom?
- What type of kitchen do you need? – layout and lighting can make a difference.
- Where do you like to eat? – in the kitchen or have a sitting room with a table?
- What about outdoor space? Do you need car parking? Do you want a garden or just a small space to sit out and have a few plants?

**“I thought I’d like a flat but I’d never lived in one. I went and visited a couple of friends. I realised I didn’t like having people above me. I managed to find a small house.”**

## What will help you feel independent?

- Able to get out and about and do the things that you like doing.
- Steps to front door? You might want a ramp or good handrails, or space to put them in.
- On a bus route.
- Car parking space.

## Family and friends, and being part of the community

- Shops close by.
- Near to friends and family, or able to get to see them.
- What will make it easy to get to groups and other social things that you do?
- Is there access to community activities in the area?

## Feeling safe - what makes you feel safe?

- Streets with lighting.
- No dark alleys that you have to walk down to get home.
- Close to other people.
- Good neighbours.

## Money things

- Think about the costs of the house – the price or the rent and council tax.

- Find out about what it costs to run and to heat.
- If you are living in a flat, find out about shared costs or service charges.

## Getting support

For most houses there are no care services linked to it.

- You organise the care and support you want if and when you need it. We have contacts in the directory to get you started.
- Having the house and the support separate makes it easy to change one and keep the other as your circumstances change.
- You can get an alarm fitted easily. This will alert someone if you fall or need help – a relative or a care service, whoever you choose.
- People who need high levels of support can get this in ordinary houses.

**“I went with my pal for a walk in the area I was thinking about moving to. It’s a good way to look at the houses, decide if it feels nice and safe. You can chat to people who are working in their garden and to the people in the corner shop, and find out a lot that way.”**

There are some types of housing that have care attached to them.

Sheltered housing is designed for older people or others needing extra care.

- There is usually a group of flats all with residents in these circumstances.
- There is someone on site or nearby, at least for part of the day.
- The design of the houses is planned for people who need support, such as an open layout and alarms in the rooms.
- Very Sheltered Housing has an even higher level of support and is especially for people who need this.

Some Housing Associations have houses that are for older people with easy access to care:

- The care is for some tasks – they will have details on this.
- If you need a higher level of support, you get this organised separately – the contacts in the directory will tell you how to do this.

**“I didn’t want to move because I didn’t think I could take my dog. Some landlords are fussy. I found a really nice flat and my dog came too. It wasn’t a problem at all.”**

Retirement housing is designed for people who want smaller houses and neighbours in similar circumstances.

- Each person rents or owns their own flat or house.
- In some places, if you own a flat there may be limits on who you can sell it to if you decide to move. Others are marketed as ideal for older people but are available to anyone who wants to live there.
- Someone looks after the property – building maintenance, gardening – but there is a charge for this each month or year.
- Sometimes there are shared facilities such as a residents’ lounge and guest bedrooms.
- There may be a low level of support from a member of staff around part of the time, or contacts with services that provide cleaning. If you want any more support you need to organise it yourself.

Care homes provide a much higher level of care and support.

- People have their own bedrooms and bathroom, and share common areas such as lounges and dining rooms.
- There might be a kitchen where residents can make drinks and snacks if they want to.

- The staff at the care home provide all of the care and support you need.

## Housing options

The most common options are:

- Buying a house or flat.
- Owning a property but releasing money to use for adapting or improving it, or other costs. You can get advice about this.
- Renting from a Housing Association. There are usually limits on who can get houses, such as a connection with the local area, and many have waiting lists.
- Renting from a private landlord.
- Moving in with family or moving to a new house with family members.

**“Visit an area you are thinking about at different times of the day and week if you don’t know it already. Try to go along to places such as the community centre, or the church or golf club as a visitor to see what they are like and if folk are welcoming.”**

**“After my husband passed away I moved to a flat which was nice and easy to manage. It was a good house but the wrong location. I missed the friends in the old area where we’d brought up our family. Last year my daughter was saying the same thing. She wanted to move back too, but it is mostly family-sized houses in that area. So we decided to club together. We’ve bought a bungalow just across from the shops and beside the bus stop. You meet everyone there.”**

## Organisations to help you

It can be useful to talk to people who have a role in giving advice or specialist information. They can point you to other sources of information and help.

Some of the things that they will want to talk about include:

- Why you want to move.
- What you want to make better by moving.
- What things you want in a new home.
- Where you would like to live.

- Your financial circumstances: Your income and savings. Any benefits you get – they might be able to tell you about some benefits that you are eligible for that would help you. What it costs you just now to live where you are.
- Solicitors for Older People Scotland (SOPS).
- Carers Trust.

**You will find the contact details for all these services and advice people in the accompanying Directory of Services.**

If it is some time since you bought or sold a house you will find that there are a few new things that buyers and sellers have to do.

Estate Agents and solicitors who provide services for people who are buying or selling can advise you on all the things that need to be done. They usually arrange these things for you as part of their service. Estate agents and solicitors should also be able to give you an idea about what houses in your area are being sold for. That helps you plan out what you can do.

Some of these organisations that people told us about are:

- Falkirk Council Housing Service.
- Falkirk Council Social Work.
- Housing Options Scotland.
- Citizens Advice Bureau.
- Later Life Information Centre (Age Scotland).
- Take a family member with you or someone else that you know and trust.
- Talk to them beforehand so they know what you want to find out – they can help take notes or remind you of things you wanted to ask.
- Have a list of your questions written down.
- Take information with you about your circumstances, financial and so on, as well as what things you are looking for in a new home – it is easy to forget things when you are in a meeting.
- Ask for another meeting so that you can think about what you've heard and ask more questions or to clarify things.
- Don't feel that you have to make any decisions straight away.
- You can go and talk to more than one advice service.
- Ask people you know and trust who they got advice from.

## Our tips

## Housing Options Scotland

They give advice that is very specific for you and your circumstances. They send a written report about your housing options based on the information you give them. You can then speak to them and ask lots of questions about the information they've given you.

## Falkirk Council Housing

Some of the council housing officers are trained in giving housing options advice. They can talk to anyone who lives in the Falkirk Council area. They will talk to you if you live in your own home that you have bought, if you live in private rented accommodation, in a housing association house, a council house or in any other type of housing.

## Later Life Information Centre (Age Scotland and Solicitors for Older People)

This information centre can help you with a wide range of issues that are important for older people as well as thinking about your housing options.

## Citizens Advice Bureau

CABs can help you work out your housing options, your financial situation and help you with lots of information to help you make your decisions.

## Contacts and more information

Strategy Team on 01324 590797 (then select option 2) or email [strategic.housing@falkirk.gov.uk](mailto:strategic.housing@falkirk.gov.uk)

Kay Wood on 07753229673 or email [olderpeoplesforum@btconnect.com](mailto:olderpeoplesforum@btconnect.com)

All of the Moving Assistance Hints and Tips the Directory of Services are available from the Wisdom in Practice Website <http://www.wisdominpractice.org.uk/falkirk-moving-assistance/>

Falkirk Moving Assistance project has been funded by Falkirk Council through the Change Fund.

It has been developed and delivered by Outside the Box with help from the Make It Happen Forum.

The Make it Happen Forum is for people aged 50 and older to get involved and have their say in community life.

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



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