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Lack of retirement homes 'stops older people downsizing': Thousands stuck in large family homes due to a 'chronic shortage' of properties

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- Saga said many retirees would like to buy more practical accommodation
- Half would consider moving out of family home if there was more choice
- Knight Frank has urged house builder to focus on housing for pensioners
- Estate agent says ageing population could be forced into care home unnecessarily

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Thousands of older people are stuck in large family homes and unable to downsize because of a 'chronic shortage' of retirement housing, experts claim.

The idea that they are adding to a housing shortage for younger generations by stubbornly refusing to move out is a myth, according to Saga.

The firm, which provides services for the over-50s, said many retirees wanted to buy more practical accommodation but were prevented by a lack of choice.



Saga, which provides services for the over-50s, said many retirees wanted to buy more practical accommodation rather than stay in the family home but were prevented by a lack of choice

The news comes as a report by Knight Frank urged house builders to focus on providing attractive accommodation for pensioners to offset a potential care home crisis.

The estate agent warned that the ageing population could be forced into care homes unnecessarily if more flexible retirement housing was not built.

It said this should include 'aspirational' accommodation resembling 'five-star hotels' with spas, pools, gyms, manicured gardens and several restaurants.

Meanwhile, a Saga survey of 10,000 over-50s found almost half would consider moving into more appropriate housing in retirement, rather than stay in their large family house.

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A fifth said they would move to provide money for a retirement free of financial worries, while one in 14 said they wanted to release money to help their families.

Saga said more people would consider 'rightsizing' – moving into a home that suited their retirement needs better – if appropriate housing was available.

The survey found that almost three-quarters of these wanted something more practical rather than simply smaller. Of those who would consider a move, half would look into buying a bungalow and a quarter would consider a purpose-built retirement apartment.

Only one in ten said that being close to relatives was important when looking for a home in retirement.



© AP Photo Courtesy Icarus Films

Estate agent Knight Frank has warned that the ageing population could be forced into care homes unnecessarily if more flexible retirement housing was not built (file picture)

Lisa Harris, head of communications for Saga, said: 'Older homeowners are more than willing to consider rightsizing as they approach retirement and have thrown down the gauntlet to developers to build housing with them in mind.'

Knight Frank found Britain was failing to encourage people to downsize because of a lack of retirement housing. Tens of thousands of older people would be able to maintain their independence for longer if there was more 'supported housing' in attractive retirement villages which they 'aspired' to move to, it said.

This would free up larger homes for younger families.

The firm found that less than 1 per cent of private housing being built was for the elderly, warning this was not enough for an ageing population.

The number of over-65s in the UK is set to double to 20million in 30 years. Just 1 per cent of Britain's over-60s live in retirement communities, compared to 17 per cent in the US and 13 per cent in Australia and New Zealand.

Emma Cleugh, head of institutional consultancy at Knight Frank, said: 'The Government should be urged to support far more progressively the needs of older people in terms of high quality housing, care and an aspirational lifestyle.'

Official figures show three-quarters of people aged 60 and over own their own home, compared with less than a third of those aged 25 to 34.