
Subject: SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE REVIEW

Meeting and Date: Cabinet – 8 September 2014

Report of: Joint Report of Mike Davis, Director of Finance, Housing & Community and Keith Cane, Service Improvement Manager, East Kent Housing

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Sue Chandler, Portfolio Holder for Housing, Children's Services and Safeguarding, Youth and Community Safety

Decision Type: Key Decision

Classification: Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To seek members' approval to implement changes to the sheltered housing service delivery model provided to Dover District Council tenants by East Kent Housing.

Recommendation: 1. That Cabinet:

i) Approve the new sheltered housing service delivery model as described within sections 5 & 6 of the report below and supported by tenants for implementation by East Kent Housing.

ii) Agree that options to enhance existing on site communal laundry facilities should be explored with tenants and that these should become self-financing.

1. Summary

1.1 In December 2013 Cabinet agreed that tenants should be consulted on proposals developed by East Kent Housing (EKH) to modernise the sheltered housing service they receive. The main changes proposed were:

- To rebrand the sheltered housing service as independent living with increased emphasis on promoting choices, personal independence, health and wellbeing.
- Introducing a new support planning process that enables each tenant's housing related support needs to be established, agreed and met.
- Better and more predictable access to support, advice and information through regular, twice weekly on scheme surgeries/ drop in sessions and a new telephone duty officer line.
- More planned face to face visits rather than just a daily voice call for tenants with greater support needs
- 24 hour Lifeline (pull cord) response services to remain for emergency calls.
- More effective working with health and social care agencies and a new Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator post subject to additional funding being identified.
- Applying a 'user pays' approach to improve on site laundry facilities etc.

1.2 This report sets out the results of that tenant consultation and how this has shaped the final recommendations for change that Cabinet is now being asked to approve.

2. Introduction and Background

2.1 The Council currently owns 287 units of specially designed accommodation which are categorised as sheltered housing for older people. Responsibility for tenancy and property management, on-site service delivery and the provision of housing related support to the tenants has been delegated by the Council to EKH.

2.2 Residents hold individual secure tenancies of their homes which, with the exception of some flats at Norman Tailyor House, Deal, are all self-contained with their own front door and private facilities. Some schemes also have communal facilities such as a resident's lounge, assisted bathing and laundry facilities, and guest room.

2.3 Each flat is fitted with a telecare community alarm that gives tenants the added reassurance of being able to call for assistance via a Lifeline control centre at any time of the day or night. In many instances the control centre is able to resolve the situation by providing advice and assistance over the telephone but sometimes it will be necessary for them to call a relative or friend, a doctor or the emergency services. The EKH Sheltered Housing Officer team also still provides a mobile, out of hours' response service in Dover, although the review identified that such arrangements are increasingly less common amongst sheltered housing providers because they tend to be little used and do not therefore represent particularly good value for money.

2.4 In summary the service redesign proposals are designed to promote independent living (rather than foster dependency) and improved health and wellbeing. This is in line with national policy, Supporting People expectations and tenants wishes to remain in their own homes for as long as possible. This will be achieved through having well designed and appropriate accommodation, flexible and responsive support services, and the use of Telecare technology. Housing related support will be tailored more effectively to individual residents needs and delivered in a more integrated way with health and social care where appropriate. This change in approach also potentially provides future capacity to extend the provision of housing related support services to older tenants living in unsupported accommodation in the wider community

2.5 The original review also considered the quality and value for money of on-site services and facilities such as laundry equipment, and the degree to which these service costs are being recovered through tenant service charges.

2.6 Finally, the Council previously agreed that further work should take place to develop firm proposals for any schemes/ properties identified as appropriate for re-designation, re-modelling, or alternative future use.

3 Consultation Process

3.1 The form of the consultation was developed in conjunction with tenants' representatives from the district sheltered forums through special meetings held in Canterbury, Dover and Shepway which provided an opportunity for all forum members to influence both the content and format of the documentation and the consultation events that were held at various locations across the three districts.

- 3.2 Eighteen Tenant Champions were also recruited. The role of the Champions was to provide peer support, to identify any common local concerns, and to provide an approachable and familiar face/ contact on scheme and at consultation events.
- 3.2 An A4 colour Sheltered Housing Consultation Guide was distributed to all sheltered tenants, along with a covering letter, survey questionnaire, and a reply paid envelope. The Guide explained East Kent Housing's various proposals to improve the sheltered housing service and residents were invited to indicate their level of support for each of them by completing and returning the questionnaire. Every tenant was also sent a separate card for them to state their needs and preferences relating to on-site communal laundry facilities as this had been identified as a particular issue for some residents prior to the formal consultation phase
- 3.3 Ten consultation events held at sheltered housing schemes across the three districts were attended by around 200 tenants. Tenants could either drop in or stay for the whole of these sessions which were held between 11.00 and 14.00 with a light lunch provided. Following a general introduction at the start of each event EKH Tenant Participation and Sheltered Housing team members and the local Tenant Champions were able to engage less formally in conversations about the proposals with smaller groups of residents.
- 3.4 The scheme consultation events were particularly useful in terms of myth busting. For example, some tenants arrived at the sessions with a misconception that it was proposed to remove front line staff from sheltered schemes. The team were able to reassure tenants and address these concerns, explaining how the intention was actually to make on-site attendance more regular and predictable whilst focusing support on those with the greatest needs.
- 3.5 Other concerns that were raised which were able to be addressed included:
- That tenants who did not have significant support needs would have to move out of their current homes
 - Rumours that a number of schemes were to be demolished or turned into care homes.
 - That sheltered properties would in future be let to younger people and families.
- 3.6 The consultation events also included branding workshops the aim of which were to help set clearer standards and define parameters around the services that residents can expect. Proposals to re-branding the service as 'Independent Living for Older People' have generally proved positive with tenants and staff, many of whom have communicated a clear desire to break any associations or perceived link to residential care home services. This was also reflected in the three most popular responses from tenants to a list of 15 potential aims for the service. These were:
- Providing you with a safe and secure home (61%)
 - Treating you as an individual (41%)
 - Helping people to live their lives independently (34%).

4. Results of Tenant Consultation Survey

- 4.1 A 58% response rate was achieved with 784 of the 1341 surveys issued being returned. The questionnaire, which was also available on line, asked residents to indicate whether they were 'very supportive' 'supportive' or 'not supportive' of the proposed changes overall and whether they agreed with 17 specific service improvements that East Kent Housing was seeking to introduce.
- 4.2 Nearly 94% of tenants that returned a survey were either supportive or very supportive of the proposed changes and improvements overall. The six most popular specific proposals were:
- 'Making sure our staff will be trained fully and equipped to support or redirect tenants to other services when needed' – 97.5%
 - 'Ensuring staff are available locally at the times of day when tenants most want access to them and they will have designated schemes to look after – 95.6%
 - 'Ensuring our staff have a more flexible way of working so that we can cover holidays or sickness more effectively' – 95.2%
 - 'Ensuring there is more choice for tenants about the services they receive' - 94.4%
 - 'Ensuring tenants know how and when they can contact a local Co-ordinator [Manager] and that they will have access to a duty officer for advice and support via a dedicated phone line on weekdays – 94.1%, and
 - 93% of respondents were supportive of 'EKH working with the councils housing allocations teams to review and update the criteria used to allocate sheltered housing to new tenants'.
- 4.3 A total of 455 responses were also received relating specifically to on site laundry provision. This included 85 tenants volunteering to be involved with looking at options to improve this element of the service. Generally speaking Dover tenants said they would prefer a pay as you use vend option with more robust machines than the standard domestic appliances that are generally in place now.
- 4.4 Agencies and partners that were also invited to comment on the proposals included:
- William Harvey, Queen Elizabeth Queen Mother, Kent and Canterbury and Royal Victoria Hospitals
 - Kent County Council Adult Social Services
 - Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service
 - Age UK (all districts)
 - Local GP practices
 - Citizens Advice Bureau
 - Town and Parish Councils
 - Salvation Army
 - Volunteer Bureau

- Wheelchair users group

Whilst only a very small number of responses were received from these other stakeholders a majority were in favour of the overall changes being proposed.

- 4.5 East Kent Housing has also carried out a formal 45 day consultation with its staff on the impacts of the proposed changes.

5. Proposed Service Delivery Model

- 5.1 Based on the results of the various consultations the final service improvement proposals are as follows:

- 5.2 The service should have a clear focus on promoting independent living (rather than creating dependence) and improved personal health and well-being. Services should be tailored more effectively to individual residents needs and should be provided in conjunction with specialist health and social care agencies where appropriate.

- 5.3 Housing related support needs assessments should focus more on the individual so as to allow tenants to exercise greater choice over which elements of the service they need or want and for support to be targeted towards those that need it most. This also potentially creates future capacity to extend a housing related support service to older people living in the wider local community who currently have unmet needs.

- 5.4 Current Sheltered Housing Officer posts should be re-designated 'Independent Living Manager' to reinforce a move away from the out-dated concept and expectations of a sheltered housing warden service.

- 5.5 One of the new Independent Living Managers primary functions will be to apply a robust new approach to housing related support planning. This will involve jointly developing, monitoring and reviewing an Independent Living Plan with each tenant that identifies their housing related support needs, and then helping to enable these needs to be met. All teams will use the same assessment tools and common support planning processes and procedures in line with the expectations of Supporting People. Support plans and assessments should be held electronically rather than in paper form although this is primarily a back office administrative efficiency and will not have any impact on residents access the service.

- 5.6 The review identified, by monitoring activity on scheme and through tenant and staff feedback, the times of day when tenants are most likely to need access to staff. Tenants also said that they wanted greater certainty about when staff were available to them. In order to provide consistency and continuity for residents, Independent Living Managers will retain responsibility for particular designated schemes. However, their time on site will be structured more effectively than at present. This will include more pre-arranged face to face appointments (in line with individual support plans) and regular twice weekly advice and information sessions. Additionally, tenants will also have access by telephone to a duty officer for general advice, information and support on weekdays between 9.00 am and 2.00 pm.

- 5.7 The service will operate from a centrally located 'hub' which, as well as helping to foster a 'one team' philosophy, will enable greater consistency in approach and more effective management support. This will also enable staff resources to be deployed more effectively to cover sickness or holiday absence for example. Creating local hubs in each area will provide staff with an off scheme location for administration or to write reports without being disturbed, and to give/ receive peer support.
- 5.8 Management and support will be enhanced with a dedicated service head and two Independent Living Housing Service Managers who will fulfil the line management role of district co-ordinators.
- 5.9 The outside office hours mobile responder service currently provided in Dover and Shepway (as described in section 2.3 of this report) will need to be retained for the time being although EKH will seek to further reduce the number of instances where a mobile response by staff is required. The volume and nature of calls outside of office hours will continue but will be monitored to assess value for money versus risk.
- 5.10 A similar service should be provided in Dover and Shepway on bank holidays as is currently at weekends and in Canterbury. This would bring all three districts into line with no routine on site presence on bank holidays. Reassurance calls where required, could be made by the alarm monitoring control centre. It is proposed that this change should be introduced with effect from April 2015.
- 5.11 The service review has confirmed the value of introducing a new post of Health and Wellbeing Co-ordinator to work across east Kent helping to deliver the new vision for older peoples housing services. The role would include facilitating activities, promoting health and well-being, and ensuring that services provided by East Kent Housing are integrated effectively with health and social care. EKH is currently exploring possible sources of funding for this post and hence there is no request or recommendation for the Council to provide additional resources at this stage.
- 5.12 All onsite laundry facilities should be self-financing. Soft market testing suggests that this would require a charge of approximately £2 per wash. Rather than simply levy an increased service charge the potential for a 'pay as you go' vend option should be explored. This should be looked at in tandem with exploring the potential to partner with a specialist company that can provide and maintain the laundry equipment (rather than this being a responsibility of the landlord) across all districts. This work should be undertaken in conjunction with residents that have indicated they would like to be part of the process.
- 5.13 Whilst all three districts now make separate charges for housing related support and monitoring of the Telecare community alarm there is some scope to apply additional separate service charges, for example to cover the cost of maintaining the on-site Telecare community alarm equipment which could potentially be eligible for Housing Benefit. Further consideration should be given to this as part of the councils' annual rent and service charge setting process.

- 5.14 Only limited investment in on-site community alarm systems has taken place in any district in recent years. Consequently some systems lack even basic functionality such as the ability to accept a pendant alarm trigger that the tenant can wear around their neck or as a bracelet rather than having to get to a fixed pull cord. Consequently an additional, standalone dispersed alarm unit must be installed where a resident wants the extra reassurance of a pendant. Modern Telecare technology can accommodate a wide range of add on monitors and detectors depending on the individual residents' needs. This can include efficiency and independence promoting features such as the ability for tenants to register that all is well and that do not require a personal reassurance call from a member of staff that day. The Council should consider making budget provision within their annual capital programme for upgrading of their community alarm systems that incorporates modern Telecare facilities and functionality from 2015 – 2016 onwards.
- 5.15 The final recommendation previously agreed by the Councils' was that further work should take place to develop firm proposals for those schemes/ properties identified as most appropriate for re-designation, re-modelling, or alternative future use and this is being progressed.

6. Implementing the Recommendations

- 6.1 The report sets out a number of recommendations many of which are operational in nature and which fall within the decision making powers delegated to EKH. It is the key recommendations relating to the provision of a service that has greater focus on individual tenant's needs and preferences, and which promotes independent living and personal health and wellbeing that the Council is being asked to consider.
- 6.2 The proposed service remodelling requires a restructuring of the service across all three councils affected and therefore similar approvals to implement the new service delivery model are being sought from Shepway and Canterbury councils.
- 6.3 Whilst the main service improvement proposals have been subject to extensive consultation, as set out in the main body of the report, any proposal to introduce additional service charges would need to be subject to a further tenant consultation.

7. Evaluation of Options available to Members

- 7.1 Option A: Reject all of the recommendations arising from the review and continue to provide the service based on the existing service model. This is not recommended as the way the service is currently being delivered is inefficient, does not meet Supporting People expectations and does not promote service user independence. It is potentially vulnerable in the event that Supporting People undertake a strategic service review or one of their regular service quality reviews.
- 7.2 Option B: Members may choose to accept only some of the recommendations for implementation, although all of the recommendations are considered necessary to modernise the service, deliver efficiencies and ensure the sustainability of the service in the future.
- 7.3 Option C: Accept all of the recommendations so that they can be implemented. This is the recommended option.

8. Resource Implications

- 8.1 An evaluation of the proposed changes to service delivery and staffing arrangements indicates potential reductions in direct service costs from changes to on site laundry arrangements and the introduction of additional Housing Benefit eligible service charges. Savings will also result from full implementation of the revised team structure and the managed withdrawal of current out of hours' on-call arrangements in Shepway and Dover.

9. Corporate Implications

- 9.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: No quantified additional resource requirement to existing budgets/forecasts have been identified in this report.

The report recommends that a budget provision for Telecare community alarm upgrades is made from 2015/16 onwards. The affordability and timing of this provision will require discussion/agreement once expected costs are established (PH).

- 9.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Senior Solicitor has been consulted during the preparation of this report and has no further comment to make (LM).
- 9.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: The Equality officer has been consulted during the development of this report and has no further comments to make other than to remind members that in discharging their responsibilities they are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>

- 10 Background Papers -** Sheltered Housing Review Report (September 2013)
Consultation Guide (May 2014)
Analysis of tenant consultation responses

- 11. Contact Officers:** Paul Whitfield, Head of Strategic Housing, DDC &
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