

Report to Stronger Communities Select Committee

Date of meeting: 20 September 2022

Portfolio: Housing and Property (Cllr Holly Whitbread)

Subject: New Support Model – Sheltered Housing

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Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That members consider a new “Needs led” support service for residents in sheltered housing.**
- (2) That members consider Sheltered Housing Officers working from a hub to allow work to be distributed evenly among the team.**
- (3) That members consider the re-branding of the Council’s sheltered housing to independent living and a new job title for sheltered Housing Officers of Independent Living Officers; and**
- (4) That any suggested amendments be considered by the Portfolio Holder prior to the submission of the report to Cabinet.**

Report:

1. Each Sheltered Housing Officer (there are eleven in total) is based at a sheltered scheme and visits each resident at that scheme on a daily basis, (Monday – Friday). In addition, they also visit approximately 30 older people living in the community. These people receive a visit one a week or once a fortnight depending on their need. All people receiving a visit from a Sheltered Housing Officer pay a support charge. For sheltered housing residents this is currently £16.74 a week, those living outside the scheme pay £7.97 a week.

In addition to undertaking daily welfare checks, Sheltered Housing Officers complete a support plan for each resident to determine what support they need to continue living independently. Each resident also has a fire risk assessment and personal emergency evacuation plan (PEEP) all of which are reviewed on a regular basis.

Other duties of a Sheltered Housing Officer include but are not limited to:

- Providing cover at other schemes during times of absence
- Weekly fire bell test
- Undertaking new tenant sign-up and termination of a tenancy
- Day to day housing management issues
- Monthly scheme inspections both internally and externally
- Testing alarm equipment on a quarterly basis
- 6 Monthly fire drills

As the age of residents living in sheltered accommodation varies considerably, (60 to 90+) there are some that do not want or need a visit because they still work, or go out on a regular basis, there are others that look after grandchildren and some that simply do not want to be called upon each day. Undertaking these daily visits to all residents is very time consuming especially when a member of staff is absent and their visits also need to be covered, it leaves very little time to provide true support to residents when they need it.

A daily door knock has become out of date. Residents want a more flexible service but more importantly they want peace of mind knowing that if/when they need support it will be available to them. Many Local Authorities and Housing Associations have already moved away from daily welfare checks to a “needs’ led” support service and it works extremely well because they target support at those residents that really need it.

2. **How will the new support model work?**

The number of visits a person receives will be determined by the outcome of their support plan. All residents will have their support plan reviewed to ensure we provide a support service that meets their need. So, for example, if someone has just come out of hospital, they will receive regular visits until they have recuperated. If someone has no family or very few visitors, they will also receive regular visits. If someone needs help reading their mail or making telephone calls’ we will ensure time is allocated to this. However, if someone is reasonably fit and active, they may receive a phone call once a week and a visit once a fortnight and those still in employment will receive a phone call or text once a month. Targeting visits to those that need them will allow officers to spend quality time with those in genuine need of support with resources to organise more social activities to ensure at least one event at each scheme per week, possibly more.

It is also our intention to move staff away from being scheme based to hub based. The rationale being that they will go where the work is, so for example some officers may be undertaking visits, other officers may be updating support plans or fire risk assessments and testing alarm equipment etc., while another may be dealing with administration. There will be staff working in our sheltered schemes Monday to Friday but moving them to a hub ensures residents do not become reliant on a particular Sheltered Housing Officer and the focus is on promoting independent living.

On occasions when two officers are in a scheme, when they complete their work, they will have capacity to hold a social event. Working this way will ensure our residents receive a reliable and consistent service including during staff absences and will allow them to get to know a team of staff all of whom have the skills to support them to live independently.

Anyone in need of intensive support will be assigned a specific member of staff who will work with them to ensure they get the help and support they need including from other agencies. They will continue to work with the resident for as long as necessary.

3. **Support Charge**

The current support charge will remain unchanged, this is because we want everyone to be able to access support when needed. We feel that if a tiered charging system was introduced people would opt for a lesser service due to their financial situation when in reality, they require regular support to remain independent. Although the charge will remain the same, we are fully aware of the challenges around the cost of living and in quarter one next year we will be undertaking an exercise to determine what duties can be moved to Intensive Housing Management which is eligible for funding under the Housing Benefit regime. As can be seen from the survey below, 78% of our residents believe the service they receive is value for money.

4. **Consultation**

All resident living in sheltered housing received a letter setting out proposals to introduce a needs’ led support model, a question and answer session was held at each scheme and residents were asked to complete a questionnaire. Of the 463 residents living in sheltered housing 138 returned their questionnaire. Below are the questions along with responses:

- Can you see the benefits of tailoring our support service to meet individual Resident’s needs?

Yes 75% No 10% Unsure 15%

- Do you feel that we should ensure more social activities are held at your scheme as part of this review?

Yes 68% No 27% (Not all residents answered this question)

- Do you agree that the service you receive (emergency alarm and support service) offers value for money?
Yes 78% No 10% Unsure 12%

- There will no longer be a Sheltered Housing Officer based at your scheme, instead, a team of staff will provide support to ensure you receive a reliable and consistent service. Can you see the benefit of this?
Yes 52% No 24% Unsure 23%

- Having read the letter regarding the new support model and having had the opportunity to attend a question and answer session, taking everything into account do you support the proposed changes?
Yes 51.5% No 13% Partially 35.5%

As can be seen from the results above, of those residents that returned they're questionnaire, the majority are in favour of the new support model. Full details, along with resident's comments can be found at appendix 1.

5. Re-Branding

The phrase sheltered housing infers people need looking after. Residents living in our schemes are independent and some are still in employment so the term independent living would be more appropriate with staff having a new job title of Independent Living Officer.

Reason for decision:

The current support model is no longer fit for purpose. Residents living in sheltered housing are independent and want a more flexible, needs led support service.

Options considered and rejected:

The option to continue with the current daily welfare checks was considered and rejected as it serves little purpose. Residents want a more up to date support service that is flexible and sustainable and gives residents choice.

Consultation undertaken:

All residents in sheltered housing have been consulted and asked to complete a survey. The results of which can be found at appendix 1

Resource implications:

The new support model will be funded within existing resources

Legal and Governance Implications:

This proposal meets with all requirements

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

None

Background Papers:

None

Impact Assessments:

Risk Management:

Projects of this nature are developed and managed under a project management system which includes risk management

Equality:

The Equality Act 2010 requires that the Public Sector Equality Duty is actively applied in any decision-making.

