

Report to Cabinet

Report reference: C-027-2022-23

Date of meeting: 12th December 2022



Portfolio: Housing and Community Services - Councillor H Whitbread

Subject: New Support Model - Sheltered Housing

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Appendix 1 – Resident Consultation results

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

- (1) That members approve the proposal to introduce a “needs led” support service to residents in sheltered housing.**
- (2) That members agree to Sheltered Housing Officers working from a hub to ensure work is evenly distributed among the team.**
- (3) That members approve the re-branding of the Council’s sheltered housing schemes to Independent Living and change of job title for sheltered Housing Officers to Independent Living Officers.**
- (4) Members agree to the new “needs led” support model being reviewed on a regular basis to take account of new digital technology.**
- (5) To ensure full cost recovery for the Support Service, an increase of 7.4% from 1st April 2023 is recommended.**

Executive Summary

People want different things from sheltered housing, for some their priority is the added security of door entry and the emergency alarm system, while for others it is the welfare checks from the Sheltered Housing Officer. Some want social interaction and there are those that continue to work full/part time but want to be in an environment with people of a similar age.

Having listened to our residents and those considering a move to sheltered housing, we realise that the service we provide at present, which is a daily welfare check has become out of date.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. To achieve this within our sheltered schemes, we have drafted a new model of support, one that is flexible and needs led, allowing us to spend quality time with those residents that have genuine support needs.

The term “sheltered housing” infers people need looking after. Residents living in our sheltered housing schemes are independent and so the term independent living would be more appropriate with staff having the title Independent Living Officer.

Reason for decision:

The current support model is no longer fit for purpose. Residents living in sheltered housing 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, sustainable and one that gives residents choice.

Report:**1. Background**

Sheltered Housing Officers are currently based at a sheltered scheme and visit/account for all residents on a daily basis (Monday – Friday). In addition, they 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.

In addition to undertaking daily welfare checks, Sheltered Housing Officers complete support plans for each resident to determine what support a person needs 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 emergency alarm equipment in residents’ properties 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 daily 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 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 do 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, Tendring district Council is just one example, and it works extremely well.

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 will receive a phone call or a visit once a fortnight and those still in employment will receive a visit on a quarterly basis. 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.

The support service provided by our team of Sheltered Housing Officers varies from making telephone calls, completing applications to making referrals to other agencies. This is very different from the service provided by Adult Social Care who assist residents with personal care, medication and hygiene cleans in the home. However, these services combine allow residents to remain independent for as long as possible reducing admissions into residential care.

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 one particular officer and the focus is on independent living.

There may be occasions when two officers are in a scheme and when they have completed their work, they will 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.

All residents in sheltered housing have an emergency alarm system in their property which they can activate if they need help. This sends a call through to Tunstall Response, our monitoring provider who will summon the appropriate help which could be anything from calling a doctor or ambulance to providing reassurance. The new support model will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure we take account of new digital technology.

3. Support Charge

All residents pay a support charge, for sheltered housing residents this is currently £16.74 a week, this includes £5.05 for the cost of the emergency alarm system. Those residents living outside the scheme pay £7.97 a week, again this includes £5.05 for the cost of the emergency alarm system. The support charge for all residents will remain the same, 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. We also need to ensure we cover the cost of this service. For more information on income and expenditure please refer to resource implications below.

Although the charge will remain the same for all residents, we are fully aware of the challenges around the cost of living and so 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. However, as can be seen from the survey below, 78% of our residents believe the service they receive is value for money.

4. Consultation

All residents received a letter setting out our proposal to introduce a “needs’ led” support model, in addition, they were invited to a question and answer session at their scheme and asked to complete a questionnaire. Of the 463 residents living in sheltered housing 138 returned their questionnaire. Below are the questions asked along with responses:

- Can you see the benefits of tailoring our support service to meet individual Resident’s needs? **Yes = 75% No = 10% 15% = unsure**
- 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 answered by all)**
- Do you agree that the service you receive (emergency alarm and support service) offers value for money? **78% = Yes 10% = No 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 & answer session, taking everything into account do you support the proposed changes? **Yes = 51.5% No = 13% 35.5% = Partially**

As can be seen from the results above, of those residents that returned they’re questionnaire, are 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 so the term independent living would be more appropriate with staff having the title Independent Living Officers.

Consultation undertaken:

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

Resource implications:

As can be seen from the table below the current cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) for 2022/3 is £19.75. If we apply the rent cap which is 7% for 2023/4 this will increase to £1,285.23.

For the support service to break even a 7.4% increase would need to be applied from 1st April 2023.

	Current Charge 22/23	7% Increase 23/24	7.4% Increase 23/24
	£	£	£
Income			
Sheltered Housing Residents 463 @ £16.74 - £5.05 per week	(281,448.44)	(301,149.83)	(302,275.62)
Non Scheme Residents 179 @ £7.97 - £5.05 per week	(27,179.36)	(29,081.92)	(29,190.63)
Total Annual Income Received	(308,627.80)	(330,231.75)	(331,466.26)
Expenditure:			
Employee Costs (Salaries) *	306,047.55	328,916.98	328,916.98
Employee Costs - Travel/Mobile Phones	2,600.00	2,600.00	2,600.00
Total Expenditure	308,647.55	331,516.98	331,516.98
Cost to the Council	19.75	1,285.23	50.72
<i>* assumes 4% pay award in 23/24</i>			

The table below shows the current cost to individual residents and the increase if an uplift of 7% or 7.4% were applied.

Weekly Charge Per Resident			
	Current Charge	@ 7% Increase	@ 7.4% Increase
	£	£	£
Sheltered Housing Residents	11.69	12.51	12.56
Non Scheme Residents	2.92	3.12	3.14

Legal and Governance Implications:

This proposal meets with all requirements

Safer, Cleaner, Greener Implications:

None

Background Papers:

NA

Impact Assessments:

Attached

Risk Management:

None

