WORKING TOGETHER
TO CREATE THE NEXT GENERATION
OF SHELTERED HOUSING
Working Together is an established delivery model from CIH Consultancy. It involves sharing thinking, experiences and developing approaches with peers from across the sector. Participants attend a series of collective action learning sessions which form a 'critical path'.

A fusion of CIH Consultancy’s own thinking, the thinking of participants and contributions from external contributors all create the ideal platform to debate and scope out the key ingredients that combine to inform new insight and ‘next best practice’ models.

Find out more about Working Together: www.cihconsultancy.co.uk/projects-case-studies/working-together

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THE PROJECT MEMBERS

The project members or ‘collaborators’ represent a broad cross section of organisations working across England and Scotland. They include traditional housing associations and local authority housing providers.

The principal qualification for maximising both the contribution to, and the gain from, the project was a passion for learning, innovation and developing good practice, coupled with a recognition that this can flow from open collaboration.

The project members share a commitment to developing stronger practices across their organisations and recognise the significant contribution that sheltered housing can make. The identification and exploration of the very best developing practice, new agenda and definition that has emerged represents a collaborative achievement by all those involved.

Gedling Homes
Dacorum Borough Council
Central Bedfordshire Council
Pickering and Ferens Homes
Stoke-on-Trent City Council
Parkhead Housing Association
Circle Housing (Centra)

South Cambridgeshire District Council
London Borough of Southwark
Great Places Housing Group
Dumfries & Galloway Housing Partnership

The hope of CIH Consultancy and the project members is that this Learning Report will encourage people to think differently about what sheltered housing means to them and their organisation. We hope it will act as a catalyst for housing leaders to seize the initiative and drive the changes needed to adopt a more rounded and ‘intelligent’ approach to sheltered housing.
THE CHALLENGE

Our sheltered housing tenants are getting older, living longer and an increasing number of tenants have complex health, care and support needs. The responsibilities set out in the Care Act 2014; reductions in or loss of the Supporting People grant; rent restructuring; the proposed changes to the future funding of supported housing; and unprecedented pressures in health and social care present significant challenges to the sector.

For decades we have debated the future of sheltered housing and the value that good accommodation and timely support can offer. The evidence base to support continuing investment in the sector is compelling but is too often anecdotal and does not always reach the ears of those who hold the purse strings.

The rise of extra care housing has shifted the spotlight away from sheltered housing and the poor image and the value that good accommodation and timely support can offer. This, combined with a poor image and a lack of investment in the homes provided and scheme buildings, has resulted in a decline in demand in some areas.

New housing and support models for older people need to take account of the fact that the baby boom generation has very different attitudes, interests, values and expectations as they move to the next stage of their lives; a stage that is now likely to last some 25 to 30 years.

The Changing Face of Sheltered Housing

Sheltered housing has been described as a model which provides ‘par excellence’, preventative care to its residents, especially those who are currently able to live independent lives but who may be deemed vulnerable either from risk of acute incidents or from isolation or who need a more co-ordinated pattern of care and support.1

Sheltered housing models and the profiles of residents are changing rapidly and some would say not always for the better.

Strategic reviews have raised questions about the role of full time scheme managers and service models are often changed to meet pressure to cut budgets rather than to provide a service that older people really need and want.

Our older customers tell us that they expect their support services to be flexible and responsive to their changing needs. They expect their sheltered housing environment to offer a wide range of opportunities for social interaction and personal development. They want attractive accommodation with good space standards and modern facilities that are fit for ageing. The latter is achievable in new build but given that the majority of the stock is older is this an impossible pipe dream or a realistic possibility?

There are opportunities as well as challenges. Removal of the Supporting People ring fence offered commissioners, providers and their partners real opportunities to develop preventative services based on what their clients need/want/choose without the constraints of eligibility rules, local authority departmental boundaries, and ‘what we’ve always done’. However, there is a risk that this flexibility may be eroded or lost altogether with introduction of another ring-fenced grant for supported housing following the recent announcement about forthcoming changes to Local Housing Allowance rules.2

This project has provided a platform for members of the Working Together Group to:

- Think about solution-focused ways to engage with their sheltered housing residents to find out what is important to them and the sort of service they want in the future
- Better understand how sheltered housing can help meet needs and improve health and wellbeing outcomes for older people
- Review existing sheltered housing services to assess how they can meet the future housing needs and the aspirations of older people
- Consider a range of options for change and decide on the best approach locally
- Consider a range of tried and tested funding models.

The project members and CIH Consultancy hope that this Learning Report will encourage people to think differently about the issues we face and that it will act as a catalyst for housing leaders to seize the initiative and drive the changes needed to truly optimise provision of sheltered housing in the future.

REFERENCES

1. Peter Lloyd, Sussex Gerontology Network
**THE CONTEXT**

**DRIVERS FOR CHANGE**

This Working Together project was born out of recognition that many sheltered housing providers have reached a crossroads in terms of their sheltered housing offer.

The current social housing sheltered model is very different to the previous traditional resident ‘warden controlled’ model that was aimed at older people with significantly longer life expectancy and the levels of frailty that now often accompany longer older age, who wanted to stay independent, keep their own front door and live as part of a community in a manageable well maintained home, with help on hand if needed. The major reasons for moving were most commonly cited as the resident warden and opportunities for social interaction.

Long-term residents in sheltered housing are growing older with increasingly complex levels of need. Falling demand for some schemes has led to allocation policies being extended to include younger people and those with a range of higher support needs: including substance misuse, mental health issues and a history of homelessness. This can result in people from different generations, and with very different types of support needs, living in one scheme with staff struggling to accommodate their varying needs.

Many of the buildings were not designed to meet the needs of older people with decreasing physical mobility and sensory impairment. Residents of different generations, some with complex needs, can create challenging issues for housing management. Support and care needs require detailed needs and risk assessments, resources and a multi agency approach that is often difficult to engage and sustain. Future funding sources for sheltered housing provision are unstable, under review and increasingly at risk.

There are some key issues around allocations and lettings to sheltered housing that have been largely ignored or side stepped. Sheltered housing is, or should be, a community where people can age well in place, maintain their independence for as long as possible and provide opportunities that will combat the risks associated with loneliness and social isolation. This does require sensitivity in allocations and co-operation from other agencies to achieve sustainable tenancies and harmonious community.

Project members identified the following principal challenges facing the sector:

1. Supported housing funding changes
2. Staffing cuts
3. Risk of increasingly frail older people
4. Younger people
5. Gender balance shift
6. Isolation and loneliness
7. Complex needs
8. Management challenges
9. Age, type, size, condition
10. Lettings policies
11. Void standards

These challenges were distilled into the following six questions, which were explored in the course of the Working Together project and form the basis of the rest of this report.

1. What would we love to achieve in an ideal world?
2. How do we make our sheltered service models fit for the future?
3. How do we calculate our rent and service charge income?
4. How do we make our sheltered housing asset base fit for the future?
5. If home is where the heart is, how do we win hearts and minds?
6. Making it happen. What action is needed to take our findings forward?

**WHAT WOULD WE LOVE TO ACHIEVE AND WHAT ARE OUR PRIORITIES FOR FUTURE ACTION?**

The group used Appreciative Inquiry, a strength-based approach that focuses on identifying positive practice, to explore what they felt is working well in terms of the sheltered services being provided and to discuss ideal future service models.

**Appreciative Inquiry is built on these fundamental principles:**

- In every society, organisation or group, something works
- The act of focusing on the positive influences the outcome
- We have more confidence in the future when we rediscover and carry forward the achievements of the past
- By doing this, we recognise our strength and competence and we can repeat and build on success.

**What should we be celebrating?**

Delegates felt that sheltered housing at its best can deliver the following:

- Affordable, high quality, independent housing
- Flexible, responsive support services that enable and promote independence
- Safety and security
- Accessible accommodation - in individual flats, gardens and communal areas
- Good external spaces with opportunities for gardening and socialising
- Community connections through shared spaces and in neighbourhoods
- Friendships and informal support networks
- Opportunities for social, educational and leisure activities
- Health & Wellbeing promotion
- Homes fit for living and ageing
- A living environment where people are valued and are of value.

**What kind of service models would we love to see in the future?**

- Preventative services that help address wider health and wellbeing outcomes and offer significant cost benefit to the public purse.
- Holistic support – shared across agencies, with collaborative partnership working and communication enabling personalised wrap around services.
- A key role in addressing loneliness and social isolation.
HOW DO WE MAKE OUR SHELTERED SERVICE MODELS FIT FOR THE FUTURE?

THE CHALLENGE:
to meet changing needs, and create an attractive service offer in the light of reduced funding.

We have set out below some indicators of the types of housing, environments, support and services that are important for sheltered housing providers and for older people, and will be even more important as the population continues to live longer.

Social Connection
Wherever they choose to live, older people want to remain a part of the surrounding community and continue to meet and engage with people of all ages. Feeling part of the local community, staying active and helping to contribute were felt by the group to be of key importance to older people. ‘Having a purpose’ is also key.

Combating isolation and loneliness
Funding cuts have resulted in reduced staffing levels for many providers, and many sheltered services no longer provide a scheme-based manager who is available on site during office hours from Monday to Friday. One of the more negative aspects of the Supporting People grant regime was the grant condition that excluded the direct delivery of social activities as eligible for housing related support funding. As a result, there are often few or no social activities in sheltered housing schemes and a significant proportion of sheltered housing residents who are housebound and/or isolated no longer receive a daily visit or personal call. This increases the risks of social isolation and loneliness.

The risks to the health and wellbeing of older people who are lonely and isolated are widely recognised.

The BMA reported that the impact of social isolation as a risk factor for mortality is recognised as:

- Equal to smoking 15 cigarettes a day
- Equal to problem drinking
- More harmful than not exercising
- Twice as harmful as obesity.

The group agreed that there is a significant cost attached to ignoring the above key messages, which CIH Consultancy has found are consistent in nearly every sheltered scheme we visit - wherever it is in the UK.

Doing nothing to improve an unpopular service offer is likely to result in increasing void losses and loss of market share. Schemes with bedsit provision, shared bathrooms (yes, they do still exist), no lift access and out-dated communal areas have a very limited shelf life, as do schemes that do not match the service offer of key competitors in terms of staffing presence, activities, décor, flexible support and care packages. In terms of stock condition the importance of good quality homes with support; space to age well when mobility, cognitive and sensory capacity is diminishing; and with voids and repair standards that recognise, and are sensitive to, the needs of older people.

Although many providers are constrained by lack of funding, building design, location and lack of staffing, some minor changes may make a major difference.

The following sections explore these issues further and provide case studies and practical suggestions for change.

Hallmarks of positive practice

- Encourage social inclusion. More conversation and less ‘consultation’
- Help older people to regain a sense of purpose – to reconnect and contribute to their communities
- Sheltered housing a key element of core business
- Proactive work to encourage scheme – based on wider activities
- Think creatively about how to work with health partners – it’s not just about the funding

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The following sections explore these issues further and provide case studies and practical suggestions for change.
2. Staying independent

Most older people would like to stay active and engaged either through paid work, a necessity for some, and/or volunteering in their local community for as long as possible.

Older people consistently state a desire for varied opportunities to socialise and pursue existing, or taking up new hobbies.

The mix of residents in today’s sheltered housing schemes has changed radically.

Increasingly frail residents

More residents with complex needs (substance misuse, offending, mental health issues)

Younger people with general housing needs

Group members identified a range of challenges, including balancing the varying needs of residents, who can range in age from 20 (lowest in this group of providers) to over 100 in some schemes.

There are also huge differences in terms of levels of independence, mobility and general wellbeing. All the above can make it difficult to maintain the type of service model and environment that many older people expected when they made the choice to move to sheltered housing.

Feeling safe

Many older people tell us that they moved to sheltered housing in order to feel safe. Having access to a community alarm service and site based staff who can respond in an emergency are of key importance, particularly to more vulnerable older people and their families.

Safeguarding

Increasing age may bring wisdom and experience, that we often overlook and/or undervalue, but it can also raise the likelihood and risk of abuse and self-neglect amongst some older people.

Older people are a very diverse group spanning several generations. Some mental and physical health conditions increase vulnerability, as can increased frailty, and the associated risks must be identified, assessed and monitored if they are to be effectively managed in a sheltered housing setting.

Safeguarding has implications for policies and practices; staff training and development; and multi-agency relationships and joint working. There has been some reluctance on the part of care and health professionals to share information that provides a seamless service delivery for the customers and that ensures effective collaboration.

The role of housing in safeguarding vulnerable adults is clearly set out in the Care Act 2014.

Prevention agenda

Sheltered housing can also play a key role in a wide range of prevention agendas. In particular in reducing, or delaying the need for people to move to residential care, as well as ensuring that people are discharged from hospital into suitable accommodation instead of remaining in expensive acute beds because their housing is unsuitable. It can reduce the need for home care for older people and those with a long-term condition. It is imperative that more work is done to ensure that other agencies and key stakeholders understand the impact of the good sheltered housing.

There are also huge differences in terms of levels of independence, mobility and general wellbeing. All the above can make it difficult to maintain the type of service model and environment that many older people expected when they made the choice to move to sheltered housing.

Reducing funding

Most group members reported steadily reducing levels of Supporting People (housing related) funding. This, together with the need for 1% rent reduction for social landlords and the proposed application of the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) to supported housing rents, present danger to the financial viability of some providers. This has meant that sheltered housing models have often been redesigned as a response to diminishing funding levels, rather than to reflect the above changing needs and demands.

The RESPONSE:

A range of alternative service models.

The group reviewed a range of possible alternative service models, all of which are aimed at ensuring that a day to day background presence can be maintained at sheltered housing schemes enabling older people to have opportunities to remain active and involved.

As illustrated by the following examples, these new models recognise the need for future proofing, taking into account factors such as demographic changes, increased frailty with ageing, and that older people today have very different attitudes, interests, values and expectations.

An example of saving NHS funding through transitional housing

In partnership with the NHS, Havebury Housing Association has transformed an empty flat into an additional sheltered housing unit and a transitional flat for people coming out of hospital and waiting for alternative accommodation or for adaptations to be carried out to their home. Havebury charges £155 a week to stay in the flat. This is a considerable saving on the costs of a hospital bed at around £400 a day, which presents a saving to the NHS of £2,800 a week.

Revisioning Older People’s Housing
An example of what can be achieved through collaborative partnership working, using an ‘organic’ approach, building on what was already in place locally.

**Community-based, integrated service offer.**

Central Bedfordshire floating support and hub service.

The service operates from a sheltered housing scheme and serves vulnerable people in the community aged 55+, cross-tenure. The first customers were recruited by attendance at lunch-clubs and coffee mornings, and road-shows.

Levels of independence vary, from those with a short-term need for support and advice to those with long-term care needs. Customers have a Lifeline dispersed alarm as a standard part of the service. New customers receive a one-hour support visit per week for 6-8 weeks and once the person’s immediate support needs have been addressed, the service provides a weekly phone call and monthly support visit. Customers can dip in and out of paying for and receiving this service, as their needs fluctuate.

The communal facilities at the sheltered scheme are used for support groups, (for example, a dementia support group has been set up); and to organise awareness raising and training for colleagues, customers and carers. Social and educational activities also take place, including art clubs, computer skills training, gardening, bingo and arm-chair exercise.

The service has also set up weekly assisted shopping trips in partnership with a local charity. The scheme was able to grow organically, rooted in ‘place’ and built upon the village’s existing social capital.

The scheme’s profile in the village, and the strong referral network, helps to promote the Council as a source of low-level preventative services and provides a visible point of contact, so that people have someone to contact at an early stage of needing support.

Customers benefit from continuity of support during their initial 6-8 week case-working phase in the service. The SHOs’ knowledge of the customers helps them to spot quickly if a customer needs a step-up in their support, due to a change in their circumstances / wellbeing.

The regular activities that take place at the sheltered housing hub take account of customers’ wider needs for ongoing opportunities to connect with others and tap into support as and when they need it.

The floating support service described above is charged to the customer at a cost of £6.10 per week.

An example of how a sheltered housing service was preserved following the removal of Supporting People funding and adapted to better meet residents’ expressed preferences.

**Stroud District Council – increased staff presence on site, once SP funding withdrawn.**

At 31 March 2014, the Council had a stock of 811 sheltered housing units managed as 28 schemes. Many new residents had few or no needs when they first moved into sheltered housing, but did like the security of having a presence on site and support with reporting repairs and accessing welfare benefits. However, there was little need for any other kind of housing related support at the time of the review.

The County Council had made the decision to withdraw all the Supporting People funding from districts and instead wished to offer a floating support across the County that provided support in the community. This contract was to be tendered through open competition. Stroud DC decided that they did not wish to deliver the county-wide service but did wish to still provide support to their older people in sheltered. The service model that was being delivered in sheltered housing was directly linked to the accommodation being provided.

Although residents were happy with their accommodation and felt safe and secure within the sheltered housing schemes, many felt that the support service had changed for the worse over the past few years. Many of the schemes were very quiet and had no sense of community or companionship.

**New Service Model**

Taking into account all of the information and feedback received, a new service model was developed that responded to people’s needs, was affordable and operated within the new financial constraints that the council were under due to the loss of County’s Supporting People funding.

It was important that any new model being introduced was sustainable over a period of time. Sheltered housing tenants had gone through a number of changes during the past few years and required a service that met their needs, and provided a period of stability. The Council was committed to applying a new model sensitively and keeping the period of uncertainty to a minimum.

**Site Officer**

The new service model introduced a Site Officer. The site officer is responsible for the everyday tasks around the sheltered scheme, this includes all housing management tasks including health and safety, legionnaire testing, fire alarm testing, communal cleaning, and some low level minor repairs in and around communal areas as well as in resident’s flats. These posts will report repairs for residents, when it is appropriate to do so.

**Support Officer**

The number of Support Officers was based on detailed needs assessment. Support was only required for a very small percentage of people. Support officers would have a specific case load and would cover a particularly area of the district.

The new model was introduced in 2014 and has been a success with residents who feel that they get the best of having a site officer who can help with small chores on site and in their home as well as having access to a support officer as and when they need the bespoke support service.

It should also be noted that detailed consultation was done with every tenant and sheltered housing scheme and staff to ensure that their views had been fully taken in to account when proposing new model of support. A cross party project board of elected members provided guidance and ongoing scrutiny for the delivery of the review.
The £250k investment included the installation of signage. As well as remodelling and decoration to the interior of the building, the gardens have been brightened up with a mural, designed with involvement from the tenants living at Britannia Court and painted by street artist James Zakarian. With the tenants of the scheme ranging from 48 to 101 years old, and with the Britannia Court sitting on the site of the long-since-demolished Bourne Factory, where some of the tenants worked, the mural depicts a factory surrounded by memories of films, music and culture from the past 100 years. This is accompanied with a quote about sunshine, optimism and positivity.

Overview

After full resident consultation, a detailed interior design and programme of improvements was agreed. This includes a redesigned entrance, making it more accessible and easier to use for everyone, the remodelling of an old bin store room into a scooter room suitable for parking and charging mobility stores, redesigned interiors with new wall and floor coverings, and full suites of furniture in the ground, first and second floors. The refurbishment encompassed guest rooms, corridors and created a new library area and a warm and welcoming lounge. The wall paint, wallpaper, carpets and artwork were agreed. This includes a redesigned entrance, making it more accessible and easier to use for everyone, the remodelling of an old bin store room into a scooter room suitable for parking and charging mobility stores, redesigned interiors with new wall and floor coverings, and full suites of furniture in the ground, first and second floors. The refurbishment encompassed guest rooms, corridors and created a new library area and a warm and welcoming lounge. The wall paint, wallpaper, carpets and artwork were all carefully selected by the tenants according to their colour and texture preferences and guided by an interior design consultant to take account of the needs of those with dementia.

The £250k investment included the installation of energy efficient lighting, new doors to all properties and shared areas as well as clear and informative signage.

The work took just over four months to complete, with minimal disruption to the lives of the tenants living in the scheme’s 38 flats.

As well as remodelling and decoration to the interior of the building, the gardens have been brightened up with a mural, designed with involvement from the tenants living at Britannia Court and painted by street artist James Zakarian. With the tenants of the scheme ranging from 48 to 101 years old, and with the Britannia Court sitting on the site of the long-since-demolished Bourne Factory, where some of the tenants worked, the mural depicts a factory surrounded by memories of films, music and culture from the past 100 years. This is accompanied with a quote about sunshine, optimism and positivity.

Outcome

According to Sheltered Housing Coordinator Helen Bourouei, this has made a huge difference.

“By encouraging tenants to choose the colours and the furniture, it really gives more of a sense that this place is their home. I am delighted how everyone coped with the changes too; the tenants are extremely happy.”

Here is what the people who live at Britannia Court had to say:

It’s made a big difference; we socialise more and there is increased entertainment.

The front entrance is a big improvement; bright and lots of space and still secure.

We take ownership of what happens here now and we’ve bought a TV and DVD player, and have used the increased funds from extra activities to buy items that we want to have.

The feedback from the residents has been overwhelming. It is clear they love where they live and one of the most distinct changes has been that socialising has become part of the culture at Britannia Court. The use of the lounge for people to meet and arrange events has increased significantly, people use the casual seating areas to sit and catch up and overall people look happier and are more engaged with their community.

Visitors and family members have said the place looks like a “fancy hotel.”

A perspective on housing, care and support for older people in the Netherlands.

A range of service options – based on ability to pay

Dolf Becx, a housing and care specialist in the Netherlands, gave a presentation to the working group and provided the following perspective on care and support for older people in the Netherlands.

There has been a shift in recent years from collectively organised and funded long term care in the Netherlands, to home-based care provided by family and private providers, with a small core of ‘nursing homes’ left for those with very high needs, including physical disabilities and severe dementia.

Local authority care and support budgets have been reduced in the Netherlands and authorities contract only with those organisations that are willing to work within budget limits.

National government has transferred responsibility for care to local authorities on the assumption that they could provide better care for less money and with more obligational tasks for family, with the local authority only financing care and support if support from families is not available.

Provision for older people in the Netherlands now consists of:

1. Support at home (ranging from low level support to family carers to professional day care at home)
2. Day care and daily activities in designated locations (‘care farms’, for people with dementia are very popular).
3. Senior housing with support on demand (provided mostly by housing associations)
4. Senior housing with care on demand (provided by care organisations), with restaurants and community rooms on site.

The first three offers are financed by local authorities with a budget made available from central government. The final offer of elements of 2 and 3 are financed by care insurance companies, cooperating in a regional ‘care offer’.

Cosy living

- Small apartments (21m² - 45m²)
- Organised meeting with other residents
- Meal service (2x daily)
- Cleaning service
- Support/care alarm
- €215 - €560, rent applies for benefits
- Service package: + €450 (1 person)
- + €215 (2 persons)
- Prices within state - pension levels

The ‘Cosy Living’ initiative is for people on state pensions only. People live in small apartments (hence the term ‘cosy living’) and for the cost of their weekly state pension are provided with three meals a day, activities, a cleaning service and limited support plus a lifeline care alarm.

Extra ordinary living

- Luxury apartments, with a range of services
- But also apartments that apply for benefits (max. €716, rent monthly)
- Most demand in this section 6 buildings
- Extended services in the buildings (restaurant, library, gym, theatre, shop)
- Rental prices €563 - €2000
- Service in a range of modules, meals, support, activities etc.

At the other end of the spectrum are luxury apartments costing between 563 and 1,000 euros per month. People can access a wide range of services and support but there are basic options available for people on benefits at a maximum monthly rent of 716 euros.
2. How do we sustain our rent and service charge income?

The future of Housing Cost Subsidy for Sheltered and Supported Housing.

THE CHALLENGE:
When the sheltered housing rent and service charge workshop ran in April 2016 there was considerable uncertainty about future funding arrangements for supported accommodation. There was discussion around publication of the DWP/DCLG research and what it may say. The report has now been published and the framework is out for consultation. Much of our initial discussions have been overtaken by subsequent events.

Members of the group are at different stages in identifying their costs across the rent, service charges and support income. Questions centred around what is and is not eligible for housing benefit?

A number of members had already stripped out, or de-pooled, all their costs across the funding streams, whilst others still have pooled rent and service charges. When the exercise has been undertaken to correctly cover accommodation related services through service charges, it has required a review of job roles, job descriptions and related activities.

THE FUTURE CHALLENGE:
The Government announced their broad proposals for the future of housing cost subsidy for the supported housing sector in mid-September 2016. This was followed by the publication of the consultation document and a consultation exercise through four task groups in early 2017. One key Welfare Reform element is still to be addressed, as at the end January 2017, that directly impacts on people over pensionable age in sheltered housing.

How will housing cost subsidies will be calculated within Pension Credit? Will the current Local Housing Allowance be used? What will be the impact of the 1% rent reduction?

3. Hallmarks of positive practice

Service models that are flexible enough to adapt to changing needs, aspirations and lifestyle choices

Services that reflect customer views about what they want from sheltered housing

Access to site-based staff, feeling safe and maintaining a sense of community

Working with local partners to grow services organically

Actively listening to current and future customers about what’s important to them

AT THE VERY LEAST...

Providers may feel daunted by the distance between current position and what they would like to achieve. Sometimes small changes which cost little or nothing can make a significant difference to peoples’ perception of a service, such as:

- Finding a local café for residents to meet for coffee and a chat, in the absence of any site-based communal space. (Dumfries and Galloway Council)
- Offering a flat on a sheltered scheme at reduced rent for any members of staff (not just sheltered housing staff) who are willing to be on call outside office hours (Boston Mayflower)
- Ensuring that the person specification for site officer posts includes the need for people skills, and a desire to work with older people (Stroud DC)
- Find out what (current and future) people want from sheltered housing. Are there any low cost ‘quick wins’ that could be implemented while waiting for the results of longer term asset, finance and management reviews?

For example, housing associations are working with a social enterprise Hertfordshire Independent Living Service (HILS). This is a not for profit, charitable, Social Enterprise that was established in 2007 under the name Hertfordshire Community Meals to provide meals-on-wheels and caring support for people in Hertfordshire.

HILS has developed so rapidly over the past few years and is providing a wide range of independent living support services to help improve the lives and support the independence of thousands of people who are elderly, frail, ill, disabled, or otherwise in need. These services include: installation of community alarms and telecare; nutrition and wellbeing checks and dietetic support; the running of dementia fun-clubs across the county; and supported transport. HILS served over 11,000 people in the 2015/16 financial year.
Another blow for supported housing is the Government’s announcement that the 1% rent reduction will now apply to all supported accommodation from April 2017 until 2020.

There are a number of exemptions.

1. Specialist supported housing that has a very specific definition in this context. The definition is dependent on the capital funding and commissioning arrangements, as set out in the rent standard guidance.

2. The exemption will also be extended over the remaining 3 years of the policy for fully mutual / co-operatives, alms houses, Community Land Trusts and refuges. This exemption does not include most sheltered housing.

The Announcement

The broad proposals, as outlined in Damien Green’s statement, are that there will be two different sources of funding to cover the rent and service charge subsidies for tenants.

Firstly, Local Housing Allowance (LHA) and secondly a ‘Top Up Fund’ administered by local authorities. The Government also announced that the new framework will be implemented for the financial year 2019/20 for all those in supported accommodation.

There will be no transitional protection for existing tenants. This is an extremely challenging timetable for all involved in the process of developing and implementing the new framework, including supported housing providers.

What could this all mean?

Local Housing Allowance (LHA)

The LHA for Supported Accommodation tenants will be paid at the equivalent Local Housing Allowance rate for the area. The LHA rates for a one bedroomed flat for members of Working Together members varied between £69.73 and £260.64 per week. In some parts of the UK, most notably London and the South East, the LHA will cover the full costs, but in others it will not even cover the core rent let alone the service charges.

There is little detail on how the housing cost element (LHA) will actually be paid e.g. to the landlord or directly to the tenants at the time of writing this report.

“Top Up Fund”

The announcement indicates that in England the Government will devolve an amount of funding for disbursement locally to local authorities. In Wales and Scotland, an equivalent amount will be provided. It will then be for those administrations to decide how best to administer and allocate the funding.

The Government has also announced the fund will be ring-fenced ‘in recognition of the need to manage the transition to a new funding regime carefully’.

There is no indication as to whether this will be a permanent ring-fence.

The DWP has since announced that they are considering “additional protections” for the Top Up Fund, but no details have been issued to date.

The Challenges and Questions

Whilst the announcement provides a direction going forward the second challenge is likely to be found in what has yet to be announced. There are countless questions, such as who will administer the fund, housing or adult social care? And a major one, there will be a post code lottery in how the fund is administered. How will this be monitored?

One of the biggest questions and challenges is how will the level of the Top Up fund be calculated? ‘The amount of top-up funding will be set on the basis of current projections of future need’ (Green, D, 2016). This appears to indicate that the fund will not be based on actual but potential need. This poses many serious questions, such as, who would be responsible if the fund does not cover all the costs either in year one or subsequent years?

There will also be challenges for housing providers. For example, how will rent accounting / co-operatives, alms houses, Community Land Trusts and refuges. This exemption does not include most sheltered housing.

For example, how will rent accounting software deal with differing payment sources with potentially differing payment periods, and processes? How will housing providers fund essential service, for example: grounds maintenance, communal cleaning if the fund is not able to cover the full cost for all services?

Tenants could also face major challenges. The fund removes the rights of tenants to receive housing cost subsidy. How will tenants be advised when they sign tenancies that make them responsible for service charges they may not be able to afford in the longer term? If the payments do not cover all their costs can they challenge decisions? Could they be evicted?

THE RESPONSE:

The advice on how to move forward differs very little from that given at the Working Together session on rent and service charges in May 2016, it is just more urgent.

Hallmarks of positive practice

Get your rent and service charges right now: the clock has started ticking.

Immediate priorities – start identifying your risks

- this is not an exhaustive list but a starter for 10:
  - What is your local LHA across your accommodation?
  - When were your rent and service charges last reviewed?
  - Ensure you review the above information asap.
  - If you need to increase your service charges to cover your costs, how can you do it?
  - How many of your tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefits?
  - Do you know how many of your tenants are under Pension Credit age? This is important to identify how many will have to claim Universal Credit v Pension Credit.
  - Are there areas of your costs that are too high?
  - Are there elements of your service charges that may not be eligible for Housing Benefit and future housing allowance under Universal Credit/any proposed inclusion in Pension Credits?
  - Are your pools pooled and if so are they transparent across all services?
  - Do you compare with your nearest neighbours and competitors?
  - Do you need to review your tenancy agreements?
  - How and when do you intend informing bar members or Councillors of the changes?
  - How and when do you intend informing prospective and current tenants of the changes?
  - What impact might this have on demand?
  - What are the short, medium and long term impacts on your business planning?

Ensure you know exactly what your costs are to deliver all elements of your service

Ensure you know how to apportion your costs correctly over all income streams

Ensure that your accommodation is identified as sheltered/supported accommodation by Housing Benefit

Start identifying your risks, based on the list below

HOW DO WE MAKE OUR SHELTERED HOUSING SCHEMES FIT FOR THE FUTURE

THE CHALLENGE:
The buildings in which our sheltered housing schemes are located, and the land on which the buildings sit, are in many cases a tremendous asset. But are we making the most of these assets by investing wisely and using them to best effect?

All too often our sheltered housing offer is typified by small sized accommodation in ageing, sometimes tired, buildings that is a far cry from the very best contemporary design. With the expectations of older people having risen sharply over recent years, in many cases prospective residents are turning down what they see as ‘inferior’ accommodation.

Sheltered housing schemes have struggled to cater for the more frail older people that have sought accommodation when independent living has become untenable, with too many failing to provide level access into and within the property falling far short of the needs of residents living with dementia. The provision of ‘extra-care’ schemes is often more suited to providing the higher level of care that this group requires, although funding restrictions are likely to have a significant impact on the potential provision and growth in the numbers of these types of schemes.

Some housing providers are finding that they need to use their sheltered housing stock to provide a housing solution for younger older people who neither want nor need the type of facilities that some of our sheltered schemes provide.

Some typical design issues:
- Bedsits providing shared bedroom/living area and very small overall accommodation size; difficulty and cost of converting them into one bedroom units
- Sizeable numbers of upper floor flats with no lift access
- Institutionalised design & layout
- Ground floor accommodation (bungalows and flats) that are accessed by steps
- Some purpose built sheltered housing schemes that have stairs, steps and ramps in communal corridor areas
- Bathing facilities that are shared, cramped or otherwise unsuitable
- Common rooms that are underused and underutilised
- Tired, bland décor and inadequate lighting levels that doesn’t provide for the needs of people with poor eyesight or dementia
- Inadequate parking provision to cater for the needs of a generation of older car drivers
- Mobility scooter storage problems

AT THE VERY LEAST...
Ensure that your accommodation is identified as sheltered/supportive accommodation by Housing Benefit.

Find out how many tenants receive Housing Benefit and make a start on knowing what your costs are and how they should be apportioned.

Measuring the impact
It is really important that we measure the impact of the proposed changes on tenants and providers. We need to be able to provide a robust evidence base from as wide a representative sample of sheltered housing providers as possible.

CIH is committed to supporting the sector in delivering this evidence base with the Working Together partnership. We welcome wider participation from across the sector and this process is underway.
4.

So how do we deliver a stock of sheltered housing properties that is ‘fit for purpose’, ‘fit for the future’ and ‘fit for ageing’?

THE RESPONSE:

All too often, housing providers struggle to know where to start in formulating their asset based plans for their sheltered housing stock.

A good place to start is to understand the relative suitability and sustainability of the current stock of sheltered housing properties against an agreed ‘fit for purpose’ standard. Coupled with resident consultation, and working closely with asset management colleagues, you can then explore the potential options available and assess their costs and feasibility.

It could be that many properties merit programmes of improvement to the individual units and any common areas to bring them up to the new standard. But other schemes might need more major remodelling, the costs of which will need to be carefully considered with decision making processes that stand up to scrutiny. Some properties might be more suited for other uses, whilst others might be better used for other client groups.

Hallmarks of positive practice

Sheltered schemes should be:

- Well located, with easy access to shops and services. Level access into, out of and within the property
- Well-designed internal layout, wider doors, ease of movement. Separate bedroom and lounge areas (not bedsits)
- Modern kitchens and wet rooms, with contrast colours/materials and good lighting. Full height living room glazing to ‘let the outside in’
- Modern, good quality mechanical and electrical installations with additional health and safety features
- Modern décor in common areas, accent colours, dementia friendly. Wide, bright, light communal areas that allow ease of movement
- And have attractive garden areas, seating and visual/sensory features, easily visible and easily accessible from the communal lounge

Top tips

- Be clear about what standard of accommodation you are striving to provide; develop a clear local standard in partnership with residents and other stakeholders and consider the merits of having both ‘essential’ and ‘desirable’ criteria to give you more flexibility
- Before you invest heavily in improving ageing schemes, using financial performance assessment and options appraisal processes to consider the cost and viability of different scenarios
- Think about how you can badge and market your properties more clearly, perhaps sub-dividing the older person’s housing stock for different target groups based on the location and facilities
- Can land or buildings be released for new or additional development? Open land might offer opportunities, as might redundant common rooms.
- Future-proof test your options – will they be attractive and suitable for new generations of older people and changing needs/ aspirations?
- Be brave in seeking out and delivering the right solutions; but develop your evidence base first so your decision making stands up to scrutiny.
- Identify and involve a wide range of stakeholders – collaboration is key.
- Learn from a wide range of positive practice

These pictures demonstrate a welcoming scheme with well maintained gardens and easy access along with a nice communal area with fashionable chairs that are in a variety of different colours. In contrast the pictures below show a less good example of a welcoming scheme and not so good internal corridor decoration.
IF HOME IS WHERE THE HEART IS, HOW DO WE WIN HEARTS AND MINDS?

The Challenge:
The Ageing Population UK analysis

Over 14.9 million people in the UK aged 60 and above – 1.5 million people are aged 85 or over. There are now more people in the UK aged 60 and above than there are under 18.

Our ageing population
Being older can last a long time – from 50 to over 100 – so capacity, resources, needs and aspirations over that time are hugely variable and will change. It is a complex picture that demands creative, flexible and easily adaptable responses, affecting design, accessibility, tenure and services. The arrival of the ‘baby boomer’ generation at retirement is having a significant impact on expectation and demand for quality and standards of services, and on possible funding.

Our information, messages and marketing therefore need to be much more effective than they have been – many people still consider sheltered housing as institutional and stigmatising. Societal attitudes and common images of older people do not help.

Some housing providers are finding that they need to use their sheltered housing stock to provide a housing solution for younger older people who neither want nor need the type of facilities that some of our sheltered schemes provide.

The population is ageing, which means we are living longer and there are more older people as a proportion of the population; between 2005/06 and 2014/15 the number of people aged 65 or over in England increased by almost a fifth and the number aged 85 and over rose by a third.

The increase in the older population is projected to accelerate over the next twenty years. Across the UK there are now more people over 65 than under 18.

AT THE VERY LEAST...
Relatively minor changes to décor or service design can make a big difference to the attractiveness of a scheme.

For example, New Charter transformed a hard to let sheltered scheme with bedsits by employing an interior designer to upgrade communal areas along the lines of a small ‘bijou’ hotel.

Modern décor in common areas, accent colours, dementia friendly. Wide, bright, light communal areas that allow ease of movement.
Currently only about 6 per cent of older people live in specialist housing in the UK. This is significantly lower than the numbers in, for example, Canada and Australia. There is a large under-supply, but we are also unlikely to be able to keep pace with the growth of an ageing population in terms of numbers of units. And it is important that sheltered housing is seen as part of a range of housing options and solutions for our ageing society.

**Housing choices**

We are experiencing a housing crisis, with many younger households having difficulty accessing home ownership and therefore building up housing equity to future proof their old age – this has important implications for any policy development looking to shape housing and care funding in the long term.

As a result of these dominant factors in the public debate, there is an increasing focus on making ‘best use’ of housing stock by encouraging older people to downsize and move from the family home, once the family have left. More levers exist in the social sector to achieve this, currently by giving help arranging practicalities of the move and incentivising with small amounts of cash.

But similar levers to incentivise older home owners to downsize and find alternative properties do not exist and, to date, there are not enough really attractive alternative homes in the right place to ‘pull’ them to seek new homes that may be more fit for their purposes, and release more family homes for younger households with children. This is despite the National Planning Policy Framework requiring local planning authorities to:

‘...plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community (such as but not limited to, families with children, older people, people with disabilities, service families and people wishing to build their own homes.’

This is a missed opportunity to look more strategically at the delivery of sheltered housing that is attractive for older people at a stage when they are still active and well but may appreciate moving into more convenient homes, particularly in view of the repeated increases in energy costs. (Age UK estimate that 4.5 million older people live in fuel poverty.)

**Housing options for older homeowners**

We have tended to ignore this group as a potential source of demand for sheltered housing and an opportunity to radically restructure our business models.

- Could we reconfigure sheltered housing to be multi tenure?
- Would this help to overcome the current revenue risks associated with the social rent model?

In reality one-quarter of older home owners have less than £125,000 in housing equity. Many more people are entering older age with debts. A recent report by the International Longevity Centre found that one-quarter of older people used unsecured credit and three in ten (1.1 million) were struggling to repay and were in ‘problem debt’.

In the longer term as fewer people access home ownership, and more enter older age with mortgage and other debts, the availability of housing wealth to support health and care costs will be far less secure.

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**Rising to the Challenge – the sheltered housing contribution.**

The diagram sets out some of the challenges of housing an ageing population. We need to keep people healthy and well, but in doing so we must have appropriate housing, in the right places, at the right cost. And we must be able to offer different and flexible housing options to suit individual needs and changing aspirations of our ageing population.

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**Sheltered Housing: A Virtuous Circle**

- Housing supply
- Health & Wellbeing
- Housing conditions
- Place & community
- Affordability & flexibility

Older age groups are more likely to have health conditions, many of which are preventable and most of which are manageable if people have access to good care and support.

1 in 10 of people age 65 and over are ‘frail’, rising to one in four of those aged 85 and over.

Women are more likely to fall than men and in 2014, nearly a quarter of men and a third of women aged 85 to 89 had a fall in the last five years.

More than one in four women aged 95 to 99, and one in five men have dementia.

People are living for more years with disabilities.

How well people are likely to be in older age mirrors broader social and economic trends.

1 in 10 of people age 65 and over are ‘frail’, rising to one in four of those aged 85 and over.
5. What do people want?

As explored earlier in the report, sheltered housing residents expressed a desire for community and an eagerness not to be seen as ‘just old’.

Tenants we interviewed spoke about the damage to their self-esteem of losing status as they age, being marginalised as ‘redundant’ to society and perceived as a drain on public funds.

Many felt that this perception of sheltered housing residents was prevalent even amongst other older people living in general needs housing and was a factor for some people not wanting to make the move to sheltered housing.

Many residents felt that they had a contribution to make to their communities but lacked the opportunities to realise this.

Sheltered housing is a housing choice not a care choice – a positive housing move to provide security and support for a diverse range of needs and lifestyles – which do/should not stop at retirement from paid work or when moving into sheltered housing.

Well-connected has often been interpreted as linked to transport, shops and health facilities, but increasingly it also means the importance of leisure and cultural amenities that can sustain the lifestyles developed throughout lives – which do not stop at retirement from paid work or when moving into sheltered housing.

- Location, location, location – well placed, well connected, age-friendly environment
- Good and attractive design – the HAPPI criteria, dementia friendly, homely
- Accessible – an enabling environment
- Affordable tenure options – rental, purchase and shared ownership
- Low ‘running costs’ – efficient, controllable heating, with transparent & reasonable service charges
- Good space standards – decent homes plus
- Safe and secure – preventing anxiety, isolation and loneliness
- Connected – to local community with opportunities for cross generational engagement
- Stimulating – wide range of opportunities for learning and socialising
- Flexibility – responsive support services
- Access to parking for residents and visitors
- Good outdoor spaces with well-maintained gardens
- Enabling independence, control and choice – respecting dignity and promotion of good health & wellbeing
- Close to friends and family networks – to give and receive support
- Opportunities for peer support – community and social activity.

The Working Group members’ tenants, who have taken part in local Appreciative Inquiries have given the following reasons for their decisions to move into sheltered housing and some of the outcomes for their quality of life.

- “Getting together with like-minded people and hearing other people’s views. Involved in social activities.”
- “Feeling that I can contribute still even though I am getting older.”
- “Feeling secure. Help and advice when needed.”
- “Happy to move into a flat. Lovely view.”

These views echo findings from similar engagement exercises across the UK. Good sheltered housing works, it makes most people happy and it improves their self-reported health and wellbeing.

The commercial sector is far better at capturing and marketing customer feedback and we need to be smarter in doing this and using our customer base to promote sheltered housing. The working together project has provided a platform to share and disseminate positive practice.

THE RESPONSE:

Increasing the attractiveness and tenure options of sheltered housing for older people will mean being innovative, adaptable and delivering options to meet needs, aspirations and expectations. Historically there is a low level of understanding of what the best sheltered housing for older people represents. A problem perhaps increased by the term itself? We have all struggled to agree on a new descriptor that can achieve the desired shift change in perception.

So, can new models of retirement housing meet the aspirations as well as the needs of different generations of older people now and in the future?

We need to listen and respond to customer concerns. There are common problems and concerns from sheltered housing tenants. These are reflected in the following feedback from Appreciative Inquiry events:

Understand what we can expect from sheltered housing

- More of a presence on site. More involvement from scheme staff.
- Tempt more residents to participate in activities. More varied activities and opportunities to get out and about.
- Better vetting of new tenants to prevent later problems. Try to make a community out of mixed ages from 65 to 102.
- A visit every day. Better communication at weekends when no one is on site. Return of full time warden.

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5. Possible new approaches

Sheltered Housing Service clusters
- Could a hub and spoke approach be extended to utilising clusters of sheltered housing schemes in a wider locality, with all adding to the facilities and opportunities there are in total for residents in the schemes and in the local communities?
- What population and scheme density levels would be needed to make this work? What about ease of access across and transport between schemes? Would this be an option for more urban areas? How could a wide range of services be delivered in more rural areas?

Wider offer
How feasible would it be for new build retirement schemes to be required to encompass additional resources such as health centres or local libraries? These could encourage people of all ages to use and become familiar with the scheme and interact as neighbours with residents? The nature of the resource may influence how negatively or positively the scheme was viewed; as a means for vibrant interaction or as a place for ‘old people’. Could this also be a source of additional capital/revenue funding that might support more social interaction in schemes?

Rural provision
How can sheltered housing be delivered in rural areas, where the numbers needing or wanting this type of housing in each village may be low? The Debenham project is a community initiated project which connects volunteers to statutory services in a shared aim to support carers for people with dementia. It does not have any residential base, but might retirement housing in a rural area provide facilities and a focus for similar co-produced services to support older people be possible?

A home for life or a lifestyle?
Is sheltered housing a home for life or for a lifestyle? As we all live longer, do we need to be more flexible ourselves about moving as our needs increase?
Should we be developing staged, flexibly constructed older people’s housing where the needs based services can be made available rather than requiring people to move?
Models exist that allow for moves within a larger scheme as people get increasingly frail – can this be part of the retirement housing offer or does that make it something different, albeit still part of a continuum of choice for us as we age?
Are there lessons we can learn from private retirement housing choices about how we market ‘easy living’ housing for older people that meets a lifestyle choice?
How do we provide specialist housing for increasing numbers of older people with complex needs and ensure that their conditions are well managed?

Ensuring that schemes are dementia friendly
850,000 people with dementia in the UK. Two-thirds live in their own homes in the community but 34% do not feel part of the community.

What people with dementia say they want - co-produced outcomes for Dementia Action Alliance.
1. I have personal choice and control or influence over decisions about me
2. I know that services are designed around me and my needs
3. I have support that helps me live my life
4. I have the knowledge and know-how to get what I need
5. I live in an enabling and supportive environment where I feel valued and understood
6. I have a sense of belonging and being a valued part of family, community and civic life
7. I know there is research going on which delivers a better life for me now, and hope for the future

We all have some responsibility, so how can housing providers help?

Dementia-friendly environment and design features
- Location
- Scale
- Understandable with good visibility
- Non-institutional
- Lighting
- Acoustics
- Safe walking routes
- Access to safe garden and landscaped areas
- Availability of communal spaces

Interior décor
- Signage
- Contrast of colour or tone to make switches and objects visible
- Contrast of tone to differentiate between walls, skirting boards and floors
- Floors and carpets of consistent tone
- Soft, anti-slip floor coverings
- Use of personal items, artefacts and pictures for way-finding
- Important rooms e.g. bathroom easy to find and identify
- Furniture and fittings to make clear the purpose of a room
- Glass-fronted or uncovered cupboards for items needing to be found
Example of some questions

Please score each answer from 1 – 5
(1=barely met, 5=totally met)

1. Is there space to walk around independently both inside and outside the development?
2. Is the flooring matt rather than shiny and of a consistent colour i.e. does not have speckles, pebble effects or stripes?
3. Is the flooring in a colour that contrasts with the walls and furniture?
4. Are the handrails in a colour that contrasts with the walls and can they be grasped properly?
5. Are there small seating areas for people to rest along corridors and outside?
6. Are there age appropriate points of interest and way finding clues throughout the development e.g. different colours or artworks on each floor or residential block?
7. Development e.g. different colours or artworks on each floor or residential block?
8. Are lifts easy to find and do they have large control buttons?
9. Have the outside areas been designed to encourage engagement and activity e.g. circular/returning pathways, raised flower beds, a clothesline?
10. Are dead ends avoided by putting a chair or an artwork at the end of a corridor?

Investing in expertise & joint working

Work to ensure sufficient provision and commitment from other services to help to meet the needs of those with dementia particularly those people who are in the latter stages of the disease.

Raising awareness amongst other residents and families within schemes to enable them to understand what it means to live with dementia and how they can help by being being friendly, patient, welcoming and understanding.

Ensure that staff have sufficient time to facilitate a range of activities at schemes (social physical cultural) and support individuals to become take part.

Access to local dementia awareness sessions to enable all staff and residents who have signed up to become dementia friends to attend sessions.

We could do more to be dementia friendly around providing information and support to staff and customers, making our services more flexible to respond to customers living with dementia and their carers, and rethink how we deliver maintenance and aids and adaptations.

We should prioritise the telecare and assistive technology services we provide, tailoring our maintenance service and improving staff awareness and information provision.

Using the research to shape organisation planning we intend to:

- test a new approach to delivering services for customers living with dementia in a pilot area where we can be confident that this will have a positive impact for a significant number of customers living with dementia
- involve customers and staff in developing the services we offer those living with dementia
- identify where we can integrate dementia-friendly measures into existing systems and training programmes
- embed practical measures quickly where we can; for example making appropriate adjustments when carrying out planned maintenance projects, and increasing the range of assistive technology we offer.

6. THE CIH HALLMARKS OF POSITIVE PRACTICE

The following link will take CIH members to a free publication that provides further examples of positive practice in sheltered housing.

Visit: www.cih.org/publication-free/display/vpathDCR//templatedata/cih/publication-free/data/Sector_showcase_sheltered_housing

In addition to the examples provided in this report the sector showcase highlights the following issues that many providers are seeking to address.

Standard and quality of accommodation: The standard and quality of the accommodation is a critical factor for most organisations when commencing a review. This is necessary primarily to respond to the changing and increasing expectations of older people, but it also reflects the increased requirement for adaptable and accessible stock as older people age in place, or enter sheltered housing at an older age with identified health/mobility problems. The Care Act 2014, which identifies suitability of accommodation as one of the fundamental elements underpinning wellbeing, is another driver.

Using and maximising the benefits from the asset: Increasingly providers are looking at how they can best use and maximise the benefits from these valuable assets; by increasing the access to and services run from communal facilities, engaging health and care partners and, particularly recently, providing short term accommodation for step down accommodation to facilitate successful discharge from hospital. Part of that approach also involves consideration of what other uses some schemes may have where they are not fit for purpose or where costs of improvement are not financially viable.

Involving tenants: A common theme in the case studies is the engagement of tenants in the process of review and remodelling of services. Several commissioned CIH Consultancy to help them, and a key approach they use includes appreciative inquiries with tenants, staff and stakeholders to identify and build on the strengths of the service. These illustrate some common themes and concerns of tenants regarding their services, such as:

- maintaining the safety and security of tenants through a continued and clearly communicated staff presence on schemes
- supporting people’s health and wellbeing through social and leisure activities enabling them to participate in their community and continue to feel valued
- the skills and knowledge of staff – addressing the rising and increasingly complex needs of tenants and the ability to engage other agencies
- modern and high standards within the accommodation
- adaptable, accessible schemes, with high quality communal facilities to support activities (for those within schemes and in the wider community)
- well maintained gardens/grounds and space for parking and mobility scooters
- homes and services that are fit for purpose, fit for the future and enable and support ageing well in place.
Thanks are due to the following who contributed to the delivery of the working together project:

Dolf Bex
Sue Garwood
Lorraine Regan
Kate McAllister
Jo Linney
Richard Medley
James Warren