

Sheltered Housing Consultation Feedback Actions

The purpose of this report is to summarise the feedback and issues of concern raised at tenant's consultation meetings as part of the Sheltered Housing Review.

Introduction

Sheltered housing tenants were consulted on three service options following the council's intention to withdraw Supporting People funding from the sheltered housing service in April 2013. The council's preferred option is to expand the service and to enhance it (option 3). This will enable us to most effectively meet the needs of residents.

The first round of consultation was carried out at all 20 of the sheltered / extra care housing units across the borough, completing on 3 May 2012. 44% (278) of tenants attended the consultation meetings

The overwhelming majority of tenants stated their preference for option 3 (the enhanced service model).with all 20 schemes voting in favour. Only 6 out of the 278 voted against. These tended to be younger tenants who require little or no support and were content with the current model of support:

- Lucy Brown 1 (option 1)
- Marden (Young men) 1 (option 1)
- Rockgrove (again younger male population) 2 (option 2)
- Harry Lamborn 1 (option 1)
- Keetons 1 (option 2).

This report summarises the key issues raised by residents as part of the consultation exercise which are being picked up and addressed through the sheltered housing improvement plan.

Consultation - Resident Priorities

Repairs

Communal:

Tenants throughout consultation have highlighted the need for greater levels of investment to sheltered properties. Action is underway to replace furniture and look at identifying resources to decorate schemes; this will ultimately improve the well-being of residents.

Individual:

Tenants have complained that many repairs have been completed to a poor standard with contractors having to re-visit.

Tenants with higher needs have also reported more assistance is required on a daily basis. Whilst surgeries are carried out currently weekly by support staff and monthly by resident officers, often the more vulnerable tenants rely upon neighbours to report

repairs on their behalf. Many tenants therefore feel the current service does not meet the needs of more vulnerable residents.

Consideration is therefore to be given to having a dedicated handy person service. The reporting of repairs will also be assisted by the re-introduction of a day time on site warden service.

Criterion for Sheltered Housing

Tenants have raised their concern about new tenants with increased needs coming in to sheltered housing without additional support. There is an increase in mental health diagnoses as well as dementia. In some instances this has been the cause of anti-social behaviour in schemes due to reduced capacity. Some tenants have stated schemes should be balanced with more able-bodied residents.

In contrast, others have raised concerns that younger tenants are moving into sheltered housing. They are more independent (with some still working) and often are reluctant to get involved with social activities.

Both points are being considered as part of the review, and in planning for an aging population. Careful consideration will need to be given to changes to sheltered criteria as part of the wider council lettings review.

Security and Access

All sheltered schemes have CCTV and they are being upgraded to digital systems.

With support staff no longer being on-site this has meant residents currently feel vulnerable.

Residents have reported they have seen intruders in schemes and did not know who had let them in. In addition to this, schemes need improvements to doors and garden areas to ensure security.

Staff regularly advise tenants of the importance of security in schemes and where there is a suspected intruder arrange for an alert be raised.

Tenants have also reported contractors are requesting access without having identification or arranged appointments with the individual. In such circumstances residents have been told not to give access. All contractors should have personal identification numbers (PINs) obtained from the SMART Team.

Residents have stated that having staff on-site overseeing visitors will improve their well-being. As part of the review into sheltered housing, the council would be discussing concerns raised and seek further funding to make improvements to security in the schemes.

New Tenants

New and existing tenants have also reported they have only been issued with one key. The sheltered team are currently completing a project to have all existing tenants issued with a second key, to be placed in the key safe in case of emergency. Work has also been done to ensure all new tenants are issued with two keys by the Area Housing Office.

Laundry Facilities

Tenants have requested greater consideration be given to laundry facilities in sheltered housing. Many schemes have two washers and dryers however some schemes only have one machine. With an increase in needs, rotas are currently in place for many schemes to ensure tenants with carers are able to use the facilities at the time of their planned care. It has been recognised that with an increase in needs more tenants will require assistance, and provision for machines will also need to be increased to meet changing needs.

Emergency Response

Following the restructure in 2009, the support team provide a hub based floating support service with SMART (Southwark Monitoring and Response Team) providing an out of hours service.

Tenants have stated when staff were on site they would immediately respond to emergencies, however now both sheltered and SMART staff can take up to an hour to respond.

Residence also raised concerns regarding the amount of time taken to respond to 'lock out' calls, as these were not treated as an emergency. This continues to be monitored by both SMART and the sheltered service.

Visitors Parking Permits

In the North of the borough tenants have complained friends and relatives are regularly clamped when they visit due to parking restrictions. Often tenants spend large amounts of money to ensure permits are provided to each relative prior to visits. Without visits many residents have said they would be isolated. Currently concessions are being considered for Saturday parking at schemes.

Intercom / Warden Call System / Lifts

Tenants have raised concerns regarding poor flat numbering systems on front doors and lift, with failures to warden call, door entry and intercom systems.

Reports have been made to the engineering team and numbering systems are now updated as well as intercom volumes changed on warden call systems.

However, many of the current systems need replacement and a schedule of works is planned by the Engineering team to upgrade schemes.

Digital Switchover / Concessionary TV Licensing

All sheltered tenants received information regarding digital switchover in October 2011. All sheltered aerials were updated prior to initial switchover date of 4th April 2012 and the council has supplied digital boxes for communal television.

In the borough floor plans have been obtained, this was a requirement to have concessionary licences for each scheme.

Lew Evans consultation

Lew Evans is unique among the sheltered units as being the only Extra Care in-house service. The consultation was a chance for residents to discuss what additional service would be most useful. Residents could make suggestions regarding alternative requirements to the options. Lack of attendance at social activities was noted. A number of individual repairs queries were noted. In this regard, there was strong support for an on-site handy person service as well as a sheltered housing officer.

Sheltered Housing Officers

The creation of the post of Sheltered Housing Officer (SHO) is in response to several of the main issues of concern raised by sheltered residents. The SHO will be responsible for ensuring schemes are kept in a good state of repair, and will also carry out health and safety, fire risk and other checks. The presence of the SHO at the scheme during normal working hours will increase security, as well as being a focal point for visitors and contractors. Amongst other duties, the SHO will also look to facilitate regular meetings with tenants, and be a regular source of information (service changes, or minutes and newsletters).