

Shaping the Future model for Support in Sheltered Housing in Somerset

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Cabinet Member: David Huxtable

Division and Local Member: N/A

1. Summary

- 1.1. **Sheltered Housing is comprised of two separate elements. The first is 'designated accommodation', (i.e. a flat or bungalow), which is equipped with an interactive alarm system. Designated accommodation is provided by the landlord and paid for by the tenant in the form of rent and service charges. Tenants on low incomes can claim Housing Benefit to assist with this element of Sheltered Housing. The second element which is what Somerset County Council's (SCC) money currently funds is 'support'.**
- 1.2. **Support includes regular or occasional welfare checks which provide reassurance and a minimal level of social contact. It may also involve help with basic household tasks such as dealing with correspondence, arranging essential appointments and sometimes help to plan meals, organise shopping or foster good relationships with neighbours. Support is commissioned by SCC and is generally delivered by non-resident support workers employed by the housing provider. It is important to distinguish support from 'care' which attends to personal needs such as washing, dressing etc. Care is not an element of the Sheltered Housing service.**
- 1.3. SCC's contracts for support in Sheltered Housing schemes will end on the 15th October 2018 at which point SCC is proposing to not continue with the contribution of funding to the Sheltered Housing providers. Instead, SCC would like to recommend reinvesting some of the funding into further developing the Somerset Community Connect model of support by building the right infrastructure to enable people to be able to access support within their local community. This will help to ensure that the support is available to everyone in Somerset and not just those living within Sheltered Housing schemes.
- 1.4. **SCC provides a contribution of funding to the Sheltered Housing providers to support those with the most high-level needs. The current contracts cover up to 3,500 Sheltered Housing tenants in Somerset, around 12 per cent of these Sheltered Housing residents have been identified as having high level needs. The remaining 78% of people have their needs met through the general charging and funding outside of the Somerset County Council contribution.**
- 1.5. Some of the Sheltered Housing providers, Aster and Guinness have already consulted with tenants about proposed changes and are implementing a new model of service that doesn't rely on the SCC contribution.

This pro-active change of approach has also provided reasonable justification that SCC should now begin to work with the other Housing Providers to consider different models of support. This has already led to Liverty beginning to embark on a period of consultation with their tenants regarding changes to their services on the basis of wanting to become self-sustaining and not dependant on external funds. All Sheltered Housing Providers will continue to offer tenancy related support services to their tenants.

- 1.6. Somerset Community Connect is a partnership between SCC, the Health Service and local communities and voluntary organisations. Community Connect helps in a number of ways by using paid, part time, highly trained individuals to work with people within their local community to help them achieve their outcomes and remain independent within their own homes for as long as possible. These include Village and Community Agents who work with a range of local voluntary organisations and businesses to develop community solutions.
- 1.7. Somerset's County Plan is built on working with health partners to "join-up" and modernise our services to make life easier for those that need help, therefore the above recommendations will enable us to;
 - Help residents off Somerset look after themselves and not rely on council or other providers.
 - Enable residents to have control over their own budgets and make the choices they want by working with the residents and community to help people stay independent for as long as possible.
 - Helping vulnerable and elderly people – we will make it easier for people to access support in their own communities and provide better information and support to help individuals stay in their own homes for longer
 - **Protect and care for the most vulnerable in the community and support their carers.**
 - **Support older people and those with disabilities to have choice and control**

2. Issues for consideration / Recommendations

- 2.1. Officers will be recommending that on 25th June 2018 the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health approves the following:
 1. Decision to discontinue the contribution of funding to the Housing Providers from 15th October 2018 that currently supports those Sheltered Housing tenants with high level needs.
 2. Agree to the recruitment of additional Community Agents for a pre-agreed period to mitigate as follows;
 - a. The transition between the funding stopping in October and the new Community Connect service being commissioned in March.
 - b. Where there is known gap in Community Connect service this resource will help provide an enhanced universal offer to all residents of Somerset.
 3. From March 2019, SCC will reinvest the right amount of money that meets the needs of Somerset residents into developing community infrastructure that can support all adult residents of Somerset. This will include the re-commissioning of Community Agents, Talking Cafés and the online tools to support the Community Connect model.

3. Background

3.1. SCC currently invests circa £1.2million annually to support those with high level needs in Sheltered Housing in Somerset. By transferring funding to invest into the (already established) Community Connect model of support we will continue to offer these services to Sheltered Housing users but will also be able to increase support across Somerset and make it available to those who currently may not be receiving the help they need because they don't live in Sheltered Housing. By investing in the Community Connect model we will be making services more equitable and advantageous to all the residents of Somerset for the following reasons;

- SCC recognises that the Community Connect model has been a key enabler in improving access to community services and aiding the transformation of ASC operational practice in Somerset.
- The Community and Village Agents have contributed directly to an increase in the use of community based solutions being used to fulfil all or part of a persons assessed need in Somerset through their role on the Peer Forums and by building close working relationships with the operational teams.
- The Community and Village Agents have a great knowledge of the local area and are able to find innovative solutions to help support people within their local community. This includes working closely with local businesses, charities and voluntary groups.
- This community based support is put in place as an alternative to ASC funded support and has enabled the operational teams focus resources on those with more complex needs.

3.2. Some of the existing Sheltered Housing providers have expressed a preference to work with SCC and their tenants around a move to a different model of support that would become a chargeable service for tenants. Most providers already charge tenants and some have indicated that a small top up to that charge would enable them to continue to deliver a similar service across their schemes. Some providers (Aster and Guinness) have already consulted with tenants about proposed changes and have already implemented a new service with no impact on residents. Others (Livery) are just about to embark on a period of consultation with their tenants regarding changes to the service and have successfully made similar changes in other areas that they operate in.

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. To ensure this decision is fully informed we are undertaking a two-stage public involvement and consultation exercise; the first to inform the development of the SCC proposal and the second to gather views on the preferred commissioning model moving forward and its potential impacts. The consultation will complete on 30th May, and the outcomes from the consultation and the impact assessment will accompany the Cabinet Members' key decision report. The first draft will be available on 4th June 2018.

- 4.2.** As a result of the involvement exercise the following three key themes were raised;
- Tenants were willing to consider alternative models of delivery as to how they receive their support service on the assumption that a service would still be available.
 - Tenants voiced concerns around losing their “wardens” as they deemed these members of staff vital and imperative for a sustained quality of life.
 - In the majority tenants were happy to pay an additional charge to their housing providers to ensure that the current service continued alongside the possibilities of an alternative model of delivery.
- 4.3.** Following the involvement phase and the feedback received Somerset County Council is proposing to discontinue the contribution of funding to the Sheltered Housing providers and reinvest into developing Somerset Community Connect as a more equitable service where funding will support everyone and not just those in Sheltered Housing. This proposal is now under formal consultation.
- 4.4.** So far the results of the consultation are that we have received 188 responses. Of this 85% are from Sheltered Housing tenants.

38% happy with proposal
23% are not happy
25% don't know
14% didn't respond.

5. Implications

- 5.1.** All potential impacts on stakeholders are being considered and will be reflected in the Members key decision and its accompanying Impact Assessment. However, in summary there are no financial implications because monies will either be saved or reinvested. There is no legal implication as this is not a statutory service and we can confirm there is also no sustainability, health and safety and privacy implications identified so far.
- 5.2.** The biggest implication for this change will be on the current Sheltered Housing tenants, particularly those with high level needs currently in receipt of support. Those are the tenants considered to be most vulnerable and on the threshold of requiring a statutory intervention. Should the Cabinet Member for Adults and Health approve the decision, we will start working with the Sheltered Housing Providers from July 2018 to ensure that those tenants are identified and supported either through the Housing Provider service or are supported to access existing Community Connect resources, if they need to. Therefore there will be a seamless transition when the contract comes to an end in October 2018.

6. Background papers

- 6.1.** Decision Report – Cabinet Member key decision – Shaping the Future Model for Support in Sheltered Housing in Somerset (available 4th June 2018)

Appendix C - Shaping the Future Model for Support in Sheltered Housing in Somerset Equalities Impact Assessment (available 4th June 2018)

Appendix B – Shaping the Future Model for Support in Sheltered Housing in Somerset Consultation Outcomes (available 4th June 2018)

Note For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author