

PAPER FROM THE DEVON SHELTERED PROVIDER FORUM

The purpose of this brief paper is to give direct feedback to the HSSP and to the JCB of the Forum's views on some aspects of the strategy for housing & support services for older people. In addition to highlighting those aspects of the strategy that we regard as most positive, we wish to draw attention to those strengths of sheltered housing that we would not want to see lost as a consequence of significant change in service delivery resulting from the implementation of the strategy. Finally, whilst we appreciate the detailed implementation is still being worked up, we wish to draw attention to concerns we have over some aspects of the move to floating support services.

The Sheltered Forum is broadly supportive of the direction of travel set out in the Strategic Review of Housing & Support Services for Older People. Providers represented on the Forum recognised the potential benefits for older people in Devon not currently living in sheltered housing of the changes set out in the strategy and also recognised the impact this will have on sheltered housing services. Within the past few years the majority of sheltered housing providers represented on the Forum have made significant changes to their sheltered housing services, by for example moving away from residential scheme managers.

We welcome the following elements of Devon's strategy in particular:

- Housing support being made available irrespective of tenure
- Person centred approach with support being delivered tailored to individual needs
- Flexible housing support services that can respond rapidly to an individual's changing support needs
- Support services to be accessed through the Single Assessment Tool for Devon, which is currently being worked up
- Sheltered housing residents only being charged for support if they have an assessed support need, and not just because they live in sheltered housing
- Stronger links being forged between housing providers, local authorities, health & social care agencies, with the aim of creating a more integrated service and to further develop opportunities for joint strategic planning of support services

Strengths of sheltered housing providers would be keen to see recognised and retained:

- Peace, quiet and security that a sheltered housing environment can offer
- Community aspect of mutual help

- Effective combating of social isolation
- Support services being available to service users with moderate to low support needs, in recognition of the important preventative role played by sheltered housing in avoiding or delaying the onset of higher level needs
- An integrated service from a tenants perspective – i.e very close links between those carrying out the various roles of support, housing management, caretaking

Concerns

- Risk of increased social isolation and reduced social life for sheltered housing tenants, arising from new tenants moving into sheltered housing with little or no support need
- Affordability of the floating support model to Devon County Council:
 - what are the financial implications of these changes bearing in mind the additional costs of travelling time and mileage – costs which will not necessarily be counterbalanced by efficiency savings.
 - the extent to which a move towards a floating support service will free up resources to support greater numbers of older people will depend in part on the extent of current 'spare' capacity within sheltered housing. This can only be gauged once information from the providers' returns has been received and analysed showing the proportions of sheltered tenants in each of the levels of support, and in particular showing the numbers of sheltered housing tenants' not needing support
- Future commissioning – where providers are moving to separate out the support service from accommodation, tenants have the re-assurance that for the time being their landlord is also responsible for delivering the support service.
- What will happen to the existing tenants who are receiving the sheltered service, those that would not qualify under the new assessment process?
- With the uncertainty over the county's intentions on future commissioning, tenants may face, in early 2010, further upheaval in the support service they receive should the support service be put out to tender and another provider be awarded the contract
- Previously at a meeting held at the Exeter Golf and Country Club, providers were adamant that existing service users should not be disadvantaged. Would SP be prepared to make a statement to this end?
- Future funding for hard wired community alarm services: uncertainty over whether there will be separate contracts for community alarm services; uncertainty about how telecare will link in with remaining hard wired community alarm services

