

SHELTERED HOUSING AND LIFELINE SERVICE TASK GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES at 10.00 am on 26 FEBRUARY 2010

Present: Uttlesford District Council Members: Councillors E Bellingham-Smith, J E Hudson and J A Redfern (Chairman).
Tenant Forum Member: Paul Simpson.
Uttlesford District Council officers: Helen Harvey (Senior Sheltered Housing and Lifeline Officer), Elizabeth Petrie (Housing Management Manager), Rebecca Procter (Democratic Services Officer), Sue Russell (Lifeline Officer) and Suzanna Wood (Housing Policy and Strategy Manager).
Essex County Council Social Care: Sabira Ladha (SDS Senior Practitioner, Epping/Harlow CAT Team); ECC Supporting People: Jill Jackson and Theresa Laurence (Service Review Officers); West Essex PCT: Gail Walker (Integrated Care Manager for Uttlesford).

SH43 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Maureen Cox, Heather Duncan, John Maddams, Councillor D Morson, Karen Patient, Councillor S Schneider, Tess Smith and Suzanna Westwood.

SH44 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 January 2010 were signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

SH45 BUSINESS ARISING

Minute SH41 Out of hours and weekend service

Councillor Redfern referred to discussion of proposed charges. She said the Tenant Forum representative present at the meeting of the Task Group had seemed content, and it had therefore come as a surprise to learn at the January meeting of the Community and Housing Committee that some members of the Forum had expressed dissatisfaction about these proposals.

Mr Simpson said Tenant Forum members were concerned at the cost level for those not requiring visits. The Housing Management Manager said officers had given a detailed explanation of the costings. All three service levels would entitle sheltered housing tenants access to Careline (pull cords/pendants) and all other aspects of the sheltered housing service. Extensive one to one consultation had been carried out, to ensure people were made fully aware of the options.

Mr Simpson said the Tenant Forum was concerned at the proposed cost level for those wishing to opt out of visits. The Housing Management Manager said the fee of £10 entitled sheltered housing tenants to partake

in the entire response and sheltered housing service, whether or not they received a weekly visit.

Councillor Redfern said the concerns of the Tenant Forum had come as a surprise to her, and she did not want the Forum to feel their views had been ignored.

In reply to a question from Councillor Hudson, the Senior Sheltered Housing and Lifeline Officer said statistics could be obtained for the numbers of call out requests.

[Pam Gurton (Community Services Manager) and Gail Walker (Integrated Care Manager for Uttlesford) of West Essex PCT arrived at this point.]

Sabira Ladha asked how the costings would work. The Housing Management Manager gave a detailed explanation. In summary, each sheltered housing tenant had up until now received a daily visit, but it had become apparent over time that this level of service did not suit everyone. Uttlesford District Council had therefore undertaken a review in conjunction with a review being carried out by Essex Supporting People, and a 'hub and spoke' service was being proposed. A three-tier service would be offered, ranging from telecare support with no visits, to a weekly, or to a daily visit. The new arrangements would enable Sheltered Housing Officers to spend more time with those that need the support most.

The Housing Management Manager went on to explain that all sheltered housing tenants currently paid £14.13, which was collected alongside rent, but was a separate support charge. For those on housing benefit, this sum would be covered.

Ms Ladha asked about provision for emergencies. For example, how would anyone know if a tenant who was not in receipt of the care package had fallen? The Senior Sheltered Housing Officer said a needs and risk assessment was carried out for each new sheltered housing tenant. It was impossible to cover every scenario, but officers would not accept anyone opting out of the telecare package. Regular support plans would identify whether people's needs had changed.

Ms Ladha agreed it would be helpful to have straightforward processes for referrals, as people referred by the ambulance service sometimes had to go through complex referral processes. She recommended maintaining good contacts with district nurses and community matrons.

Officers went on to explain that a resident who had fallen and who contacted Carecall, using their wristband or pendant, would, if during working hours, be assisted by the nearest sheltered housing officer. If contact was made out of hours a responder would be sent by Carecall. In an emergency, the call centre staff would contact emergency services immediately.

Ms Ladha expressed concern that in such circumstances a long-term hospital admission be avoided where possible.

Officers said a Sheltered Housing Officer or responder would also attend, in addition to emergency services being summoned, and would contact the friends and family as listed in the support plan. Support plans were kept on site, but were also accessed by Carecall in a database.

Jill Jackson said Supporting People required all providers to have clear processes for emergency situations. Tess Smith said it was important under the 'hub and spoke' model to ensure priority was given to sheltered housing schemes, with less priority devoted to time spent in the community. The Housing Management Manager agreed scheme residents would take priority.

The Senior Sheltered Housing and Lifeline Officer said Uttlesford District Council had not had live-in wardens for some years now, during which time Sheltered Housing Officers had managed to deal with all situations which had arisen. Ms Ladha said officers should be given credit for Uttlesford's very good record.

There being no further comments, the Chairman concluded by saying the aim was now to give people choice, and to enable independent living.

SH46

UPDATE ON CONSULTATION

The Housing Management Manager gave an update on the consultation which had taken place over the year, concluding with a three-week period of one-to-one discussions with every sheltered housing tenant, including their family or friends where appropriate. Apart from a handful of individuals, this task was now complete. Each person had been fully informed about the three levels of service. The majority had asked to continue receiving a daily visit. It had been emphasised that if someone's circumstances changed they could easily move up and down the service levels, for example, temporarily after an accident. It had also been carefully explained that there would be a new response service for out of hours and weekend calls.

Officers had also consulted the Sheltered Housing Officers regarding changes to their duties. There were 18 schemes in total, but these would be divided into 14 nominal schemes, so that each of the seven full time Sheltered Housing Officers would be assigned two schemes. Smaller schemes would be linked to schemes with communal facilities.

The provision of a handyman service had attracted much interest. It would be advisable to draw a list of the types of work he or she could be required to do, to ensure expectations remained reasonable. The handyman service would be included in rent, rather than the support charge.

The Senior Sheltered Housing Officer then circulated a draft set of service standards. She said many aspects of the service had changed, and it was now necessary to update the service standards to ensure residents knew what to expect. The new service standards would replace the existing generic ones. The version now tabled had been amended to reflect feedback from the Tenant Forum. Whilst this document related specifically to sheltered housing, the Tenants' Handbook, which was also being updated, would cover general aspects of the service.

The Housing Management Manager invited members of the Task Group to comment on the draft service standards, with a deadline of 2 March, in order for them to go forward to the next Community and Housing Committee.

SH47 **OTHER URGENT MATTERS**

In reply to a question from Pam Gurton, officers confirmed Sheltered Housing Officers had access to local nursing support.

In reply to a question from Councillor Redfern, officers said Carecall would take over the out of hours and weekend sheltered housing service on 6 April.

SH48 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Councillor Redfern asked that the next meeting be held at a sheltered housing scheme, and a date of Thursday 1 July at 10.30am was agreed.

The meeting ended at 10.55am.