

**Appendix A** Response received from Cambridgeshire County Council's Interim Head of Mental Health Commissioning on 27 January 2012

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Sheltered Housing Support Service Scrutiny Report (February 2012).

Our comments are as follows:

We recognise the work undertaken by your Scrutiny Group in completing this review in relation to your Sheltered Housing Service. We also recognise the work of your officers in relation to redesigning your housing support service. We feel that it is important to put decisions and the future direction into context. Whilst your report is purely in relation to the South Cambridgeshire service, we do have to take a county wide perspective given the wider and changing needs of the older person's population; developments in assistive technology (including significantly advances in Alarms); the impact of the EU Working Times Directive on wardens' availability; the changing nature of both preventative and targeted services and in particular the financial challenges that all Authorities face.

Whilst we have changed the nature of funding through the reduction of the support charge, this is not the sole driver in relation to the need for all authorities to seek best value and to modernise services appropriately. You refer to the National Housing Federation report "More than just a few kind words". This and their other publication "Breaking the Mould" make a series of recommendations and give examples of good practice where services have changed. To invest this resource in delivering services solely to people based in fixed accommodation schemes misses the significant population base who live outside of such schemes.

As a Commissioning Authority we have a responsibility to learn the lessons from these national studies, whilst ensuring that we meet the needs to the wider population within our available resources. We have been convinced for some time, that the model of support currently provided, largely through historic models of service, does not meet the support needs of the wider older person's population. We understand that this view is shared by Housing Commissioners from the District Councils through the Supporting People Commissioning Body.

The sheltered housing schemes, in the current model, support residents with a wide range of physical abilities and of various ages. However, the support is only provided to those people living in the sheltered housing schemes. A report was taken to the Supporting People Commissioning Body in August 2010 recognising the need to provide support to older people living in the wider community. The current sheltered housing service is focussed on the 5% of older people living in sheltered housing, while 95% of older people live in the wider community. Of this 95% of older people, the majority live in the private sector (average 72% in private housing, 28% in public sector housing) and yet Supporting People funding is currently only focussed on public sector housing.

We have established a project group to oversee the development of the revised service specification so that there is both clarity and agreement on the service to be tendered and delivered from April 2013. This project will ensure that we have agreed with stakeholders the range and scope of consultation and that this will shape the Community Impact Assessment for the revised service. This project has to be managed within the financial resource available

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In relation to the report.

- Cllr Martin Curtis did revisit the funding decision (paragraph 5 of the Chairman's foreword) with the Service Director, Adult Social Care, but evidence that other providers are delivering support in sheltered housing schemes at the £9 rate contributed to the decision to maintain the original decision. The Commissioning Body also provided an opportunity for all providers who were above the £9 rate to respond on the impact of the required reductions, including what service changes could be implemented to enable this and the key milestones that the Supporting People Commissioning Body should be aware of. As a consequence of this work, it was agreed that the reduction to £9 would be implemented by SCDC from July 2012, instead of April 2012.
- A report was taken to the Supporting People Commissioning Body in August 2010 highlighting both the need to reduce unit costs to £9 and the fact that tendering by April 2012 was a risk due to the size/complexity of the task. The Commissioning Body is a partnership consisting of the District Councils, County Council, Health and Probation. This information was therefore discussed with SCDC in August 2010, much in advance of the SCDC Task and Finish Group meeting. Therefore, SCDC did have the opportunity to contribute at that time. In addition, updates were brought back to the Commissioning Body on a quarterly basis thereafter. (Reference paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4.)
- At that time it was planned that the negotiations to reduce to £9 would be completed by September 2011, for introduction from April 2012. Meetings had been held between officers from SCDC and the County Council regarding this agenda and SCDC offered up savings of 10% on the sheltered housing service in November/December 2010 as part of this work. The County Council was still working with providers on this approach until January/February 2011. At this stage it was confirmed that this County wide service would need to be subject to market testing and tendered.
- Supporting People funding is not the only funding stream for these services and changes would need to be made to these services anyway due to other funding pressures faced by SCDC. (Reference paragraphs 1.9 and 2.2.)
- Whilst Supporting People funding was originally provided for the purpose stated at 2.1, this funding is now paid to the County Council via Formula Grant and it is now the responsibility of the County Council to determine how it is invested against local priorities. There is no longer a ring-fenced grant specifically for the purpose stated in 2.1. (Reference paragraph 2.1.)
- Upkeep of communal rooms should not be part of the support charge, and if that is the case then further work will need to take place to review this. (Reference paragraph 2.4.)
- As stated in the introduction we note the reference to the National Housing Federation report "More than just a few kind words". It also includes a number of examples of schemes that support people in the wider community, developing a menu of services etc. The further report entitled "Breaking the mould", also published by the National Housing Federation, includes examples of schemes where sheltered housing services have been extended to the wider community,

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cross tenure floating support, and developing a new offer for older people. (Reference paragraph 3.1.)

- We feel that the comment regarding the residents not valuing the service until it is gone (Reference 3rd bullet point of paragraph 3.2) is subjective and does not take account of the need identified by both SCDC Officers and ourselves to extend the service to the wider community. We would also expect more detail from such a needs assessment than the four bullet points presented. Information presented recently through the media highlighted that only 1/3rd of residents are in need of support. This, and the information contained in this report, confirms that not all residents require or want a daily visit. (Reference paragraph 3.2.)

We would not recommend nor see why at this stage that self-funders should cease to be charged. (Reference paragraph 3.5.).

- We are not clear on the rationale for why £9 per week per property equates to £6.50 per property unless you cease charging self-funders. (Reference the final column of the table on page 7.)

#### Recommendations

The report contains a number of recommendations, which have been responded to below. As stated above, consultation and assessing community impacts across the county will be a key element of the development of the new specification.

- A. The quality of the support service provided to sheltered housing residents must be preserved in any new structure that is adopted
  - a. We support this recommendation but with the caveat that this is for people who want and/or need the service.
- B. Work should continue towards increasing efficiency and value for money in the sheltered housing support service
  - a. We support this recommendation.
- C. Before any change to the Supporting People funding is formally implemented the County Council, or changes to the service are made by SCDC, the portfolio holder and relevant director should attend a formal meeting with the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and/or Housing Portfolio Holder to pursue the case for a reversal of the decision, stressing the concerns of the task and finish group.
  - a. The concerns of the Task and Finish Group are recognised but the current cost of the support to the sheltered housing schemes is over and above the cost of other similar services across the county. In order to operate within the resources available, the County Council has to seek value for money in all the services that it contracts. The change to the Supporting People funding has been implemented in order to bring the current Supporting People spend in line with the current budget. We are keen to work collaboratively with SCDC and other stakeholders to plan for future services that reflect the needs of the people of Cambridgeshire across all Districts, and that is sustainable in the context of severe financial pressures.

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- D. Any redesign of the sheltered housing service should encompass the core values of community links, dignity, human contact, local hub, mutual support, and prevention.
  - a. We support this recommendation.
  
- E. If a service redesign is necessary it should build on the model presented at section 4 of this report, and incorporate the best features of the existing model. It should seek to correct any shortcomings in the existing system and improve the overall quality and effectiveness of service.
  - a. We will be very keen to have further discussion about the model set out at section 4 as part of the project work to develop a new service specification.

Recommendations FG&H are in the body of this response