

APPENDIX 1

Report to Sheltered Housing Action Group

Subject: Sheltered Out of Hours Provision.

Date: November 2009

Report of: Council/SHAG Working Group

1. Background

1.1 There are a number of key issues to the background of this project:

- Consultation in 2008 showed that sheltered residents had mixed views about the service out of hours. Some wanted a basic emergency response service only, while others valued the reassurance of the home visit element. There were also mixed view about CareLink Plus.
- The existing weekend service has been difficult to deliver because the structure requires staff to work weekends and Bank Holiday. As a result, a limited service has been delivered, sometimes using sheltered staff being paid for additional weekend working.
- There was a discrepancy in the services being offered by the council and those being offered by other sheltered providers. Some providers do not provide a weekend service while others provide a remote call service only to vulnerable residents.
- The out of hour's service is a confusing mixture of CareLink Plus and mobile officers employed by sheltered services.
- The reduction in Supporting People funding of 11.5% over three years required all providers of sheltered services to look at where savings could be made with their support costs. Following consultation with sheltered providers, the Commissioning Team have indicated alarm costs as the main area where savings can be achieved locally. The sheltered service has looked at its alarm costs and agrees that savings can be made by a re-provision of service.
- When reviewing its service delivery model, the increase from 19 to 21 scheme managers was agreed on the assumption that savings would be made on alarm costs and overheads. These savings have yet to be realised. An annual alarm cost of £45k was used within financial modelling in preparation for the review of service delivery.

2. The Working Group

2.1 The working group consisted of two members of staff (Peter Huntbach, Older Persons Housing Manager and Ginny Buckland, Sheltered Development Officer) and two residents (Brian Balchin, Jasmine Court SHAG representative, and Kath Davis, Chair of the Broadfields Tenant Association). Kath is an ex-scheme manager, previously working for Brighton & Hove City Council at Leach Court. The working group each visited or contacted a number of sheltered providers to hear about the type of service that was provided out of hours. Brian also spoke to the city council scheme managers to gauge their views on the out of hour's service. Providers contacted or visited included:

- Anchor
- Downland Housing Association.
- Eastbourne Homes
- Lewes
- Peverill
- Raglan Housing Association
- Southern Housing Group

2.2 In preparation for the review, sheltered staff had visited two alarm providers, Cirrus Communications and Wealden & Eastbourne Lifeline.

3. The Out of Hours Service

3.1 The sheltered service provides a scheme manager service, Monday to Friday, 8.30 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. (ending 4.30 p.m. on Friday). Any service provided at other times is described as the 'out of hours' service.

3.2 There are two aspects to the out of hour's service:

- Emergency response
- Weekend call service

4. The Sheltered Emergency Response

4.1 All sheltered schemes have a built in community alarm system, with alarm points in each household and in the common ways. When these are activated, (by pulling a cord or pressing a pendant button), voice contact is made either with the scheme manager or, when the scheme manager is off site, with an alarm provider. The council's alarm provider is CareLink Plus.

4.2 The primary function of the alarm is to allow the user to summon help in the event of an emergency, such as a fall, sudden illness or worsening of a medical condition.

- 4.3 The alarm provider, CareLink Plus, also monitors and responds to other alarm systems at a scheme including to lift alarms, door entry systems, intruder alarms, smoke detectors and main fire panels.
- 4.4 As lone workers, the alarm provider, CareLink Plus, also monitors scheme managers logging on and off site. If staff fail to log on or off, CareLink Plus alert the sheltered management team, who have an escalation procedure for managing 'missing' staff.
- 4.5 In major emergencies, the alarm provider, CareLink Plus, has telephone numbers of the sheltered management team and housing management managers, who can be contacted out of hours.

5. CareLink Plus

- 5.1 The council's alarm provider is CareLink Plus based at Patching Lodge. CareLink Plus is owned and managed by Brighton & Hove City Council and is part of the Adult Social Care & Housing directorate. The council's sheltered service has always used CareLink Plus as its alarm provider since it was formed in 1987.
- 5.2 CareLink Plus has 22 members headed by a management team of 4. The service operates over 24 hours every day. During normal office hours, there are a minimum of two people answering calls, though this increases during peak periods. Out of hours, there is usually one person answering calls, though this can be increased if required. There is a manager on call and a community responder on call from home who can be contacted to attend emergency call outs.
- 5.3 CareLink Plus provides an alarm service not only to the council's sheltered schemes, but also several housing associations in the city. CareLink Plus also provides a 'dispersed' alarm service to approximately 3000 living in the community.
- 5.4 The sheltered services pay CareLink Plus £130k per year for their service (or approximately £2.90 per week for each sheltered property – the 'unit cost'). The service is determined by historical arrangement and CareLink Plus is keen to re-negotiate service agreements with providers, including the sheltered service.
- 5.5 CareLink Plus also provides an out of hour emergency repair service for the council's housing service, including sheltered housing. Outside of normal office hours, CareLink Plus receive and screen repair calls before passing on to contractors.

6. Use of the CareLink Plus Alarm Service

- 6.1 In 2008/9 a total of 49, 605 alarm calls from the council's sheltered services were received by CareLink Plus - or 58 calls for each household. This compares to a total of 14, 505 from the housing

association sector – or 23 calls for each household. Although these figures include staff monitoring calls.

7. Home Visits Out of Hours

- 7.1 CareLink Plus has staff who can attend to site in a 'people' issue emergency e.g. to give access to the emergency services. Between Oct 07 and Oct 08, CareLink Plus staff attended to the council's sites 157 times (approximately 3 times per week).
- 7.2 The alarm providers contacted did not provide a home visit service, although this was an option they would be willing to consider if requested. One alarm provider said that they could offer this on a 'cost per visit' basis (of £25 per visit) rather than as a flat across the board charge.
- 7.3 Those sheltered providers contacted all had an escalation procedure for major emergencies and would use their own staff rather than alarm staff (e.g. Southern Housing Group, Anchor, Raglan, Lewes, Downland).
- 7.4 To respond to 'building' related issues, the sheltered service employs a mobile sheltered officer on a rota basis. The mobile officer is paid a standby payment of £25 per night and will attend to a scheme when called by CareLink Plus. In 2007/8 the mobile officers attended to the schemes 105 times.
- 7.5 The working group considered that better use could be made of existing resources to reduce the number of out of hour's home visits by an alarm provider. The group felt that sheltered residents should be asked for named key holders who could be contacted in an emergency (this could be a local relative, neighbour or buddy). The group felt that volunteer residents could be used to respond to calls, particularly no-voice response calls in the common ways. The group felt that other existing resources, such as the Neighbourhood Response Service, could also be used, particularly where there was a building related issue. Where the alarm provider was sending staff out to give access to emergency services, the group felt that better provision of key safes was the best option (it was noted that at Courtney King House, managed by Southern Housing Group, there was a built in key safe in the entrance lobby).

8. The Weekend Service

- 8.1 All sheltered housing residents receive a daily call if they choose.
- 8.2 At the weekend, the council operates a weekend call service operated by the sheltered mobile officers. Although there is provision in the structure for five mobile officers, difficulties in recruiting staff to work only at the weekend and Bank Holidays, has meant that only two are in

employment. As a result, there is a limited weekend call service, with residents being called either on Saturday or Sunday (although for the most vulnerable, calls are still made on both days).

- 8.3 The cost of the two mobile officers is approximately £25k per year (over and above the £130k paid for the CareLink Plus service).
- 8.4 The working group found that sheltered providers didn't offer a weekend call to all and only the council and Anchor Housing Association offered this (Anchor provided a similar service to the council with seven day calls). Some providers (e.g. Downland Housing Association) do not offer any weekend service. Some providers offered a weekend service to vulnerable residents only, and this was provided remotely by the alarm provider (e.g. Southern Housing Group).
- 8.5 The working group felt that it was not the most effective service to send someone to site at a weekend to carry out a small number of calls. The working group therefore suggested that consideration be given to these calls being undertaken remotely – and to those who were vulnerable and didn't already have a weekend service e.g. home carers. However, it was accepted that as this change would affect the weekend staff group, further consultation would be required.

9. Cost

- 9.1 The cost of CareLink Plus to Sheltered Services is £130k per annum (or approximately £2.90 per week for each sheltered property – the 'unit cost').
- 9.2 The cost of providing an alarm call system with a home visit option is inevitably higher than those that provide a voice only response service (because of staff working out of normal hours). A basic voice only alarm service can cost as little as £0.40 pence per week per unit.
- 9.3 In the council's service, CareLink Plus do not provide a home visit for building related issues (although this service is provided to some housing associations). The provision of mobile officers employed by sheltered services is therefore an additional cost over and above the CareLink Plus cost.
- 9.4 The provision of a weekend service is also a 'hidden' out of hours cost (see 8.3 above) as some providers do not offer a weekend call service or have this service undertaken remotely by their alarm provider.
- 9.5 The working group felt that the cost was high and should be lower. The working group felt that if a basic call service could be obtained for as little as £0.40, then the amount being paid over and above this for a home call service was not value for money (given the relatively low number of actual home calls). One of the group had rarely used the

alarm service and felt that they should be charged a lower rate for low usage.

- 9.6 CareLink Plus has asked for their current service agreement with sheltered services to be re-negotiated. This gives sheltered services the opportunity of discussing what savings can be made by the re-provision of the current service offered by CareLink Plus.

10. The Commissioning Team (Supporting People)

- 10.1 Due to cuts in their funding, the Commissioning Team have been working with all the local sheltered providers to see where savings could be made. The consensual view is that the bulk of the £120k savings required in the sector will be found from reducing payments for alarm costs.
- 10.2 The rationale behind this approach is that the unit cost of alarm service varies from £0.50 to over £5.00 per week. And although some of this cost is due to different types of service, some costs for the same type of service show variance. The Commissioning Team have proposed that from April 2010, they would pay providers alarm costs of around £0.50 per unit for a basic service to around £1.50-£1.75 for a more enhanced service.
- 10.3 The Commissioning Team have also proposed that although some providers may be able to achieve these savings through re-negotiated contracts with their alarm provider, it could also be achieved by the competitive tendering process. The Commissioning Team are therefore asking providers to consider a consortium to put together a new service specification for a joint contract for alarm services, to be tendered out.
- 10.4 If the sheltered services alarm provision cost £1.50 per week, the annual charge would be approximately £67k, a saving of £63k.

11. Other Alarm Providers

- 11.1 Although CareLink Plus is the only alarm provider in the city, and is used by the council and some local housing association providers, they are not the only alarm provider. Some providers, such as Anchor or Downland, have their own 'in-house' alarm service. Some providers use a national alarm provider, such as Cirrus Careline. Some providers use other local alarm providers, such as Wealden & Eastbourne Lifelines.
- 11.2 There was a concern about the small number of staff working in CareLink Plus, particularly the number of staff expected to attend out of hour's emergencies. There was a view that the additional cost for an out of hour visits was not value for money where perhaps only one or two people were on standby.

- 11.3 The working group felt that the sheltered service should continue to seek savings from CareLink Plus, but felt that the competitive tendering process should actively be considered to ensure that the service was market tested. Any tendering process would need to be undertaken within the council's procurement policy; given the time needed to prepare the specification and tender, it would not be possible to have another alarm provider in place by April 2010.
- 11.4 Although other alarm providers have offered rough indications of costs, these have only been given in the context of informal discussions about the services they provide (or could provide). The actual cost of services provided is likely to differ as a result of the procurement process (and may therefore be higher or lower than indicated).

12. Recommendations

- 12.1 The sheltered service should re-establish and promote the alarm system as an emergency response service only.
- 12.2 The response of the alarm service would be to summon help in an emergency. If the emergency services were not called, the alarm provider would contact a local next-of-kin, key holder or buddy as the first point of call. The sheltered service should ensure that all residents have a named local contact who can be contacted in an emergency. It is accepted that further work may be required to determine the percentage of residents with local contact.
- 12.3 The provision of a home call by CareLink Plus would be regarded as a last resort option. Housing management should consider its escalation procedures across the city with regard to major emergencies such as fire so that sheltered housing benefits from arrangement in place for all council housing.
- 12.4 The provision of a home call service must be for both building and people issues. However, better co-ordinated working with the health and social care, contractors, maintenance team, and Neighbourhood Response Service should be considered first in terms of responding to issues out of hours. There should also be a restructure or re-provision of the current sheltered mobile service.
- 12.5 Any home calls undertaken by the alarm provider should ideally be at cost per visit. This would lead to better scrutiny of why the home call visits were being made.
- 12.6 There should be greater use of volunteer residents, an underused resource in the schemes. Named residents could help with a local response on site, particularly if an alarm was alerted in the common ways. The council should provide training and support using a 'co-production' model to make this happen.

- 12.7 The sheltered services should install key safes (with a key code or remote automated access) in all schemes to enable the emergency services to access schemes without having to call someone out from the alarm provider.
- 12.8 The weekend call service should only be for those who are vulnerable. The council should explore the possibility of this being provided remotely by the alarm provider within costs. However, the group accepts that further consultation would be required as this suggestion affects staff within the sheltered structure.
- 12.9 Sheltered services should consider a menu of alarm charges so that those who do not use the alarm service are charged less.
- 12.10 Although sheltered services should re-negotiate their contract with CareLink Plus to reduce current cost, consideration should be given to the competitive tendering process. The working group accepts that this process must take place within the council's procurement policies.
- 12.11 Any re-provision of service would require consultation with residents, including Sheltered Housing Action Group. The residents on the working group were keen to be involved with any scheme based consultation. The working group accepts that there may be a need for tailored consultation with vulnerable groups to ensure that the voice of everyone is heard.
- 12.12 Any re-provision of service would require an Equality Impact Assessment to ensure that any adverse affects of any change are mitigated by positive action.
- 12.13 Any re-provision of service should be tested against the Dignity in Care challenge and any revised aims and objectives of the sheltered service.
- 12.14 Any re-provision or re-structuring of the service currently provided by the mobile staff being considered in this document would require staff and union consultation. Any changes affecting staff must be undertaken within the council's change management policies.

Appendix

Details are given of services provided by other sheltered providers. This information was gathered by members of the working group, including visits by Brian Balchin and Kath Davis. Brian also visited the scheme managers working in the council's service and Mears. This report acknowledges and thanks residents for their involvement and participation.

Southern Housing Group

At Courtney King House:

- Chichester CareLine provide the emergency alarm service.
- Weekend calls are undertaken by Chichester CareLine.
- Chichester CareLine do not have visiting staff.
- There is a residential scheme manager, but Chichester CareLine would call another scheme manager on their mobile phone (but this doesn't happen often). There are three schemes in the local area.
- Absence cover is provided by another scheme manager and Chichester CareLine respond when scheme manager is not on site.
- There is a key box outside each site enabling emergency services access to get inside – to an internal key box.
- There is a signing in book for visitors.
- Support charge £4.42 per week.
- Resident association happy with service.

Anchor Housing Association

At Jacqueline-Du-Pre House:

- Use their own call centre "never any trouble" with service (Anchor Call).
- Uses 'fire buddy' system – where other residents have keys to other flats in an emergency (residents "very self sufficient").
- People get a daily call, including weekend. This is provided on site by floating (two) causal relief managers who are on site 2 hours per day (they also undertake health and safety testing). This is optional to each scheme and decided at a local level.
- The reliefs can also cover during the week e.g. sickness absence.
- Scheme manager always in office between 9-11.
- Scheme manager reboots system though contractors are called if there is a system failure.
- Service charge varies to residents per scheme. Rent plus service charge at Jacqueline-Du-Pre is £435 per month inc utilities inc. all weekend calls (could split out costs for alarm/weekend service).

Raglan Housing Association

At Alfred Davey Court:

- Use Chichester CareLine as alarm provider.

- No weekend call – but scheme manager can request that vulnerable residents (e.g. those discharged from hospital) to be called and this is arranged through Chichester CareLine.
- Residential scheme managers – who can be called, but not at weekends. However:
- In an emergency Chichester CareLine calls the next-of-kin – if no NOK, they would call the emergency services.
- Emergency services have code to main doors and code to key box in lobby area.
- Cost of service not known.

Downland Housing Association

- Have their own emergency alarm provider (First Point)
- First Point does not provide any home visiting service.
- There is no weekend service, nor the provision to provide one.
- In a serious emergency e.g. fire, Downland would call the scheme manager and if not available, look at other local scheme managers.
- If access is required in an emergency, First Point would provide access to the building, though emergency services would have to gain their own access to individual flats.
- The cost of the service varies depending on the size of the local service – for a service of 1000 units, a weekly cost of £0.44 pence would be charged.
- First Point considering developing a personal response service.

Eastbourne Homes (Arms Length Management Organisation)

- Provides a floating support service.
- Uses Wealden & Eastbourne Lifeline as an alarm provider.
- The Lifeline alarm provider deals with any out of hours calls and would provide staff to attend if necessary (called a Community Visiting Officer CVO)
- A weekend service is provided for those who are vulnerable e.g. residents who are leaving hospital can ring Wealden & Eastbourne Lifeline and receive a weekend call. No response is dealt with by a call from a CVO.
- Cost is approximately £32 per unit per annum

Lewes District Council

- Has their own alarm provider (Lewes Lifeline Alarm Service)
- The alarm provider manager all out of hours calls
- The alarm provider would contact the key holder or NOK in an emergency, or the emergency services if no response or if appropriate.
- There is no weekend call, though there is the provision got Lewes LifeLine to undertake a call for those who are most vulnerable.
- In a serious emergency such as a major fire, there is scope for the sheltered management team to be called to site out of hours.

- Were not able to separate out of hours cost.

Peverel (Private)

- Peverel Industries own Cirrus Communications Systems (which has its own alarm provider, Careline).
- Daily calls provided by CareLine, and weekends if requested.
- No response from calls would result in contact with emergency services immediately.
- Emergency services have code to the master safe, which holds all the relevant keys for access to all parts of the building.
- Any equipment failures would be passed to Cirrus engineers.

