

**SUPPORTING PEOPLE SERVICE REVIEW - SHELTERED HOUSING SUPPORT SERVICES**

5. With reference to paragraph 7 of the Minute of the meeting of this Committee held on 2 September 2004 when (1) approval had been given to establish two Service Review Groups for Homelessness and Sheltered Housing, and (2) a progress report on the outcome of a Service Review had been noted, there was submitted a report (docketed) dated 25 July 2006 by the Director of Housing and Property Services regarding the main findings of the Supporting People Review of the Department's directly provided Sheltered Housing Support Services (a) advising that during the review process, services were required to meet criteria in order to continue to receive funding or be able to demonstrate the potential and willingness to meet them within an agreed timescale; (b) detailing within the report, the findings of the review with regard to the Council's directly provided Sheltered Housing Support Service; (c) summarising within Appendix 1 to the report, recommendations of the review, and the main areas that required improvement, and (d) intimating that many of the areas identified for improvement were currently being addressed and would be monitored as part of the Department's Housing Support Continuous Improvement Group, with the findings of the review to be used to form future proposals for the Warden Service.

**Decided:**

- (1) that the terms of the report and the findings of the Warden Service review proposals be noted;
- (2) that the proposals to take forward the review findings, as detailed within the report, be submitted to a future meeting of the Committee, and
- (3) that the report be remitted to the Social Work Committee for information.

**NORTH LANARKSHIRE  
COUNCIL**

**REPORT**

AGENDA ITEM No. 5

<b>To:</b> HOUSING AND TECHNICAL SERVICES COMMITTEE		<b>Subject:</b> Supporting People Service Review – Sheltered Housing Support Services
<b>From:</b> DIRECTOR OF HOUSING AND PROPERTY SERVICES		
<b>Date:</b> 25 July 2006	<b>Ref:</b> TMcK/SR	

**1. Introduction**

1.1 This report is to advise committee of the main findings of the 'Supporting People' review of the Housing and Property Services Department's directly provided sheltered housing support services.

**2. Background**

2.1 'Supporting People' is the integrated policy and funding framework for housing support services introduced in April 2003. The aim of Supporting People is to provide good quality housing support services, focused on the needs of users, to enable vulnerable people to move to independent living or to sustain independent living in their homes.

2.2 Housing support service reviews are required by the Scottish Executive to ensure that the housing support services meet the legislative requirements of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001. (Housing Support Services Regulations, 2002) and the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001. In addition to ensure that they provide Best Value as required by the Local Government (Scotland) Act 2003.

2.3 Scottish Executive guidance advises that all housing support service providers are to be reviewed before 31 March 2007. Committee will recall the report of 2 August 2004 outlining the service review process for the Sheltered Housing Support Service. Committee noted that a final findings report on the outcome of the service review with recommendations would be available.

### 3. Proposals

3.1 During the review process services are required to meet criteria, listed below, in order to continue to receive funding, or be able to demonstrate the potential and willingness to meet them within an agreed time scale. The review of the Council's directly provided sheltered housing support service found that the service:

- Operates in accordance with the Supporting People Plan.
- Meets identified current, and aspires to meet, future demands for services.
- Is cost beneficial.
- Is provided by an organisation that demonstrates competent financial management.
- Is registered with the Care Commission.

The sheltered housing service requires to improve, on current practice, to deliver on:

- Providing a quality service, which comprehensively meets the National Care Standards, for Housing Support Services, and the needs/preferences of service users and potential users.
- The range of prescribed services in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Housing Support Services Regulations, 2002).

3.2 Appendix 1 to this report summarises the main findings and recommendations of the review. The review found that the main areas that require improvement are:

- Developing a detailed Business Improvement Action Plan.
- Delivering national housing support standards.
- Improving staff training, policies and procedures.
- Improving Quality Management and Service Improvement processes.
- Enhancing health and safety procedures.
- Improving service user consultation.

3.3 Many of the areas identified for improvement are currently being addressed and will be monitored as part of the department's Housing Support Continuous Improvement Group. The findings of the review will also inform future proposals for the warden service, which are currently being considered.

3.4 As the review findings show, the service meets the main requirements of the Scottish Executive's review guidance, and therefore it is proposed that 'Supporting People' funding should continue for this service.

#### **4. Corporate Considerations**

- 4.1 The service review is consistent with the priorities as contained within the Council's Local Housing Strategy, Supporting People Strategic Plan and Joint Community Care Plan.
- 4.2 The Director of Social Work has been consulted upon the content of this report.
- 4.3 The proposals can be met within existing Supporting People allocations.

#### **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 It is recommended that the Committee:
  - (a) note the content of this report and the findings of the warden service review proposals.
  - (b) Note the proposals to take forward the review findings as outlined in section 3.3, which will be the subject of a future committee report.
  - (c) refer to Social Work Committee for information.

#### **6. Background Information**

- 6.1 Available within the Housing and Property Services Department.



T. McKenzie  
**Director of Housing and Property Services**

# **Appendix 1**

## **North Lanarkshire Council Housing Support Service Review**

### **Review of Directly Provided Sheltered Housing Support Services**

### **Summary of Main Findings and Recommendations**

**June 2006**

# Main Findings and Recommendations

## Introduction

This service review acknowledges the particular issues that face the provider of the service. The client group presents a changing environment in which day to day operational business is constantly and continually tested. This service review is concerned with service quality and improvement and this section outlines the main recommendations, for service improvement. For reasons of space, only the main, most important and urgent issues that require to be addressed are presented in this section. Further findings and recommendations are contained within the body of the main report.

It is recognised that since the first draft of the report was produced, efforts have been made to address some of the review's findings, particularly reflecting work undertaken to support the care commission inspection process. This combined with work undertaken to meet the challenges of Communities Scotland's Single Regulatory Framework inspection regime has led to service improvement progressed through recently established bodies such as internal 'Continuous Improvement Groups'. This improvement requires to be maintained and strengthened. Part A of the recommendations section illustrates how this could be done.

## Meeting Service Review Requirements

The review sets out that, to meet basic review criteria and continue funding, and meet requirement of Stages 1 and 2 (see section one) the service does:

- Operate in accordance with the Supporting People Plan.
- Meets identified current, and aspires to meet, future demands for services.
- Is cost beneficial, (as far as the review can determine, given limited information).
- Is provided by an organisation that demonstrates competent financial management.
- Is registered with the Care Commission.

However with regard to the additional criteria, the service requires to significantly improve, on current practice, to deliver on:

- Providing a quality service, which comprehensively meets the National Care Standards (NCS), for Housing Support Services and the needs/preferences of service users and potential users.
- The range of prescribed services in the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Housing Support Services Regulation 2002).

It is not recommended that a stage 3 review be undertaken.

## **A. Developing a Business Improvement Action Plan**

It is essential that the findings and recommendations of the review be developed into a detailed Business Improvement Action Plan with timescales identified for quality and performance improvement. Clear accountability for improvement requires to be identified. Responsibility for developing this should lie with the service senior management in co-operation with North Lanarkshire Council's Head of Housing Services and Supporting People Team. The Plan should be agreed and monitored by the Head of Housing Services. The plan requires to focus immediately on range of highly important issues identified as 'A-C' below. In addition a number of important issues require to be tackled in the medium term (next six-twelve months). These are labeled 'D-G'. Issues of a slightly more longer-term nature are identified as 'H-I'.

It is essential that progress made within the Business Improvement Action Plan is reported to North Lanarkshire Council's Head of Housing Services and North Lanarkshire Council's Supporting People Team at regular intervals. Evidence should be made available by the service provider demonstrating progress in meeting the recommendations of the review. If suitable evidence of progress is not available, then the Council's Head of Housing Services and/or Council's Supporting People Team should instruct audits, of specific features of the service, to establish whether progress has been achieved. Audits should take a similar approach to the review reflecting Scottish Executive guidance.

It is proposed that the Business Improvement plan be developed through the provider's 'Housing Support Continuous Improvement Group' which at present is progressing service improvements to the provider's other directly provided housing support services. This would enable a comprehensive, strategic and consistent approach to service improvement for all of the provider's directly provided services. This group will be chaired by North Lanarkshire Council's Head of Housing Services with input from the Supporting People Team.

## **B. Housing Support Standards**

It is evident from the review that across the six branches that the service does not at present demonstrate a consistency in meeting the national standards. This should be addressed urgently.

### **Informing and Deciding**

In the service user questionnaire survey very few interviewees could remember receiving written information about the service prior to allocation. The absence of a clear understanding about the nature of the sheltered housing service was apparent alongside confusion about what service they could expect to receive and the exact nature of the warden's duties. This lack of clarity ranged from doubts about the hours worked to the tasks that the warden is expected to undertake on their behalf.

None of the service user consultation interviewees were aware of having, or could produce, a written agreement, specifically regarding housing support services, which clearly defined the service that should be provided and which set out the terms and conditions for receiving the service and arrangements for changing or ending the agreement, what service they can expect, their rights and obligations or of the costs involved. Existing arrangements reflect pre-Supporting People practise. The new funding regime requires these changes.

Information is provided through a tenant handbook, which does include basic service information (e.g. complaint procedures). However the service requires to enhance the information, regarding housing support, by developing housing support service brochure introductory pack written in plain English or in a language and format that is suitable for a particular service user. This should show how to use the service, the Council's charging policy, what these charges are and to whom they should be paid, what is available from the housing support service, how service quality is monitored, risk procedures and how accidents and incidents are reported and recorded. It should also outline how service user's family, carers, friends and staff can be involved in service delivery.

In addition how to access the relevant policies and procedures of the housing support service and the most recent Care Commission inspection report should be included.

### Service Users' Rights

The service does not at present have separately, or as part of its missive for accessing a tenancy, a written housing support agreement, which clearly defines the service that will be provided to the service user setting out the terms and conditions for receiving the service, and arrangements for changing or ending the agreement in a format that the service user can understand. This requires to be developed.

Service policies and procedures require to be enhanced to ensure that both all staff and service users are aware of them particularly with reference to risk management, abuse, neglect, confidentiality and privacy, personal information security and access issues.

### Management and Staffing Arrangements

Care Commission and Scottish Social Service Council requirements mean that the detailed training needs of warden staff skills, abilities and qualifications require to be identified and assessed. Staff providing sheltered housing support will require knowledge and skills verified by academic qualification and enhanced by ongoing professional development.

An audit of existing skills and qualifications is required which should link to a major planned training programme as part of the provider's overall yearly staff training plan. This development work should be possibly undertaken by dedicated staff to take forward this and other development agendas.

Service users should expect that the service be in line with legal requirements and best practice guidelines. To achieve this, the service requires to significantly extend its staff training at all levels.

### Housing Support Assessment

Not all assessments and reviews, where they do occur, involve service users, partner agencies and take full account of service users own views, goals and aspirations. Sheltered housing allocation and prior assessment procedures need revised in order to ensure that placements meet the needs of prospective service users. An improved housing support assessment process needs to be developed taking into account the wider housing, housing support and related care needs of potential users.

The should be undertaken in conjunction with the council's current review of its allocation policy for all its stock. This should consider service eligibility, information sharing consent, housing allocation policy procedures, prioritisation and pointing, referral to the Social Work department, (where appropriate), assessment procedures, liaison arrangements, appeals, complaints and monitoring arrangements.

There requires to be a clear understanding within the service that its core business is a housing support service for people who require a planned programme of housing support. The service requires to focus on the activities and skills, which enable the service user to maintain their housing status.

An increasing proportion of clients are vulnerable with a range of potential support needs evident indicative of the need for more intensive housing support and/or support from other agencies/services. A greater focus on the provision of housing support is required. These should be from a combination of services outlined in Scottish Executive guidelines (appendix 1). This would require the exploration of revised job responsibilities and job descriptions for wardens to become 'sheltered housing support officers'.

### Housing Support Planning

In the service user consultation, none of the service users were aware of having been involved in compiling a support plan or of being in possession of one. There was no evidence of a structured process or record that captured the particular needs of each individual service user and clarified what specific service they could expect to receive. Support plans, where they occur, are not generally outcome based. Not all support plans are revised to reflect outcomes of reviews. Support planning does not always take account of the wider needs of the service and the extent to which these are met by partner agencies.

Support planning should be introduced and work to prepare and train staff to undertake this work taken forward. At present the service does not have formal housing support assessment and support plans. These require to be developed with corresponding IT systems and training (e.g. access to providers in-house 'HSMS' housing support module or improve/develop the integration of support planning processes with the Social Work Department).

This will also assist with the development of detailed management information systems reporting arrangements, which at present are largely absent. Reporting arrangements to service management, the Council's Supporting People Team and the Scottish Executive could then be enhanced.

Formal support planning and review requires to be developed and implemented with service users involved in developing their personal plan and in any reviews. The housing support plan should be signed and dated by the housing support provider and copied to the service user.

The plan will set out the way the service is shaped to meet the service user's needs. This should also include how to request independent representation or specialist advice and outline service users' rights and responsibilities and what they can expect of housing support staff.

Service users require to be fully consulted and involved in the preparation of their housing support plan. Not all service users currently experience this. Service users need to have a personal support plan that sets out the way the service is shaped to meet their needs. The Plan should show how the service monitors that the service meets the service user's needs that are identified. In addition, the Plan should include how family, carer, friends, staff and managers will be involved (if appropriate).

In general across the whole service, client information recorded in the service user case files requires improvement as part of the development of comprehensive housing support planning. Support planning does not, generally, take account of the wider needs of the service user which impact upon their need for support, and the extent to which these are currently being met by external agencies. Housing support planning record keeping procedures require to be significantly strengthened.

The housing and housing support needs of service users are generally not reviewed periodically on a consistent basis. Very few support plans are outcome based. The service, generally on the whole, does not take a particularly proactive approach to involving other agencies with clients or establishing stronger links or more regular interaction with other relevant key agencies. Not all service users are referred to specialist services when appropriate.

## Empowerment, Rights and Responsibilities

There is little written, or otherwise, information about what is available as regards leisure, social, and advice opportunities. The absence of adequate written information for service users and of regular user consultation suggests that the service is not adequately user focused and does not therefore have access to sufficiently accurate and up-to-date information about the views and wishes of users. The service should better enable service users to make choices about the service that is provided and how it links to their personal and social life.

## C. Service Capacity, Staffing Policies, Procedures and Training

### Service Capacity

In all branches under capacity is delivered with a corresponding potential adverse impact on frontline housing support services. Across the six branches 7.6%, not including turnover of a further 3.4%, of service capacity was not available due to absenteeism, which was above the department average. The main source of capacity loss was through illness. Absentee management policies required to be maintained to reduce the reduction of service capacity.

### Staffing Policies and Procedures

The Supporting People regime requires staff to have a more structured and formal service driven relationship with service users than is currently the case, that they engage more effectively with the wider professional community and that they become informed and in turn inform service users about other services that are available and to support them as their needs change.

Housing support is intended to be an individualised service that is relevant to the needs of the individual client. Sheltered housing has traditionally offered the same basic service to all service users, and generally it continues to do so. This runs counter to the objectives of Supporting People and NCS and creates a tension between the objectives of operating an efficient but basic service for all whilst responding to the varying needs of individual service users. This apparent lack of consistency could also indicate a lack of preparation, training, development and support for wardens. Job roles and responsibilities should be standard and clarified. Operational procedures and protocols with partner agencies require to be developed and formalised.

Mechanisms are different for each branch in terms of formal and informal supervision arrangements for staff and are mostly reactive rather than planned. Staff development and appraisal arrangements such as Performance, Review and Development (PRD) interviews with tasks and outcomes set and agreed, half-day development sessions, team meetings and forums and regular one to one meetings with line managers require to be implemented as standard.

The service needs to consider its existing structure to take account of the requirement to standardise service provision with locality based management, the implications of the Joint Future agenda, NCS standards, making best use of resources and EU regulations. The possibility of introducing locality co-ordinators to drive service development and oversee local management should be considered.

#### Planned Training Programme

Care Commission and Scottish Social Service Council requirements mean that detailed training needs of warden staff skills, abilities and qualifications require to be identified and assessed. Staff providing sheltered housing support will require knowledge and skills verified by academic qualification and enhanced by ongoing professional development.

Many staff report that they do not feel that they have received the necessary training required for them to do their job effectively. The service requires to develop a detailed staff development strategy and an effective yearly training plan for its entire staff. There is an acute need for staff at all levels of the service to be trained to have the necessary skills to be sufficient in meeting housing support needs of the client group. This will have an impact on budgetary requirements. This should be seen as a major priority.

#### D. Service Budget

For year 2006/07, the total service budget, is £1,546,357. Of this the HRA makes a contribution of £276,367 (17.8%). The remainder is funded through Supporting People Grant. There is a HRA 'recharge', of £117,069 (7.5%), which accounts for that part of the service which is supported by housing management, administrative and other corporate services staff such as personnel etc.

In future years the overall SP budget will not increase in 'real' terms. The service structure of the current service requires to be reviewed to take account of the differing service branch requirements, in terms of need, demand and provision. This should be undertaken in consultation with relevant staff and their representatives.

The financial structure of the current service may require to be modified to take account of the differing service branch requirements with disaggregated budgeting to local managers for more closer monitoring and control. Financial co-ordination and administration could be enhanced.

There should be an exploration of how ways of increasing income generation through the Council's charging policy, where appropriate, should be applied. In addition setting aside resources for IT development and staff training as well as making best use of technology should be considered.

An assessment of the non-Supporting People funding and expenditure elements should be undertaken to better quantify the respective contributions.

### **E. Performance, Quality Management and Performance Improvement Measures**

The wide range of reported, by service users, levels of service delivery suggests that a widely varying service can exist even within same complexes, though acknowledging that this can depend on the need profile of individual complexes, and reporting practices that are in place. The lack of standard procedures requires to be addressed.

The proportion of service users, who are enabled to live independently with support, across North Lanarkshire, is at very high level. However the varying reported outcomes for service users particularly the proportion of service users who are enabled to live independently with support, requires to be explored. This may be due to differing local interpretations on accessing the service, which in turn may explain a potentially differing profile of service users across branches. Procedures and understanding of the same, among staff who enable access, should be standardised.

The increasing turnover levels require also to be monitored to maintain stability also. The low number of complaints should be maintained and reduced where possible.

The service does not currently display a 'Quality Management' and 'Performance Improvement' culture with respect to housing support outcomes. Service standards and targets, implementation of same and reporting indicators are largely absent. It is recommended that a dedicated resource is established to develop and co-ordinate this role alongside co-ordinated financial and budgetary control. The review demonstrates that the service requires to improve its recording and reporting to help inform service quality delivery and performance.

### **F. Health and Safety**

There are some concerns regarding health and safety issues both for service users and staff. Responses from the service user questionnaire survey make it clear that enhanced feelings of safety and security are considered to be one of the prime benefits of living in a sheltered housing. Interview responses highlighted a number of ways in which the standard of the delivered service in this respect is not being maintained.

These include that the lack of stair or shaft lifts in some developments is becoming an increasing hazard for those living in upper floors as service users mobility decreases. Gaps and inconsistencies in the pattern of morning calls in some developments leaves more vulnerable service users unchecked for periods of time and thereby at greater risk from accidents or unforeseen incidents.

Some service users appear to be unaware of fire assembly points and are unsure what they would do in the event of a fire alarm. Health and safety procedures require to be tightened.

A number of issues with the community alarm system were identified. The provider requires to liaise with the community alarm service provider to produce improved procedures and awareness for this part of the service. As part of the Supporting People review for the community alarm system, the sheltered housing support provider should liaise with the alarm provider to improve operating procedures to maximise service efficiency and quality.

Service users should be consulted about how they would like the service to operate and be more fully informed about how to get the best out of the service. Measures must be taken to ensure that service users do not have their alarm pull cord out of their reach and are aware of the personal risks that this may cause both to them as individuals and to their neighbours.

Risk assessments and management for people with different particular needs should be carried out in order to address both general requirements and specific problems.

### **G. Service User Consultation**

There should be more opportunities for service users to engage with the warden about the service they want and any changes necessary. Regular consultation with service users is required and a system for ensuring that expressed views have a positive impact on revising the nature and quality of the delivered service to one that will meet the diverse needs of service users.

Progress has been made in improving consultation arrangements. However consultation mechanisms require to be incorporated systematically into service delivery across six branches and in turn inform quality improvement. These could include involvement in housing support planning, exit surveys, service user forums, surveys, newsletters, suggestion boxes, responding to complaints and aggregating information gleaned from individual housing support planning.

### **H. Strategic Demand**

It is evident that there is an ongoing demand for the service. However an issue, which requires to be noted, is that the number of units available (both local authority and registered social landlord compared to national indicators) is viewed as being appropriate at this stage. This should be regularly monitored.

There is an ongoing demand for NLC sheltered housing, (however not for 1 apartment size dwellings). Demand mainly exists from existing NLC tenants. In some areas there could be difficulties letting some dwellings in the near future due to localised low demand. There is a variable demand for the service across the six branches. This should be regularly monitored.

Service development should consider ensuring that the service offered is suitable for applicants, with respect to both housing and support requirements not just either or. Referral (application) procedures require to be updated, clarified and formalised, especially in connection with the assessment for services. The assessment of applications should take into account that needs should be assessed by staff qualified to identify appropriate support and care needs that ensures a consistent approach, that the number of assessments is reduced and that service users receive the most appropriate package of support and care.

Future service delivery should take account of the level of resources, particularly staffing, attached to the varying levels of provision including branch structure composition and profile in terms of number of complexes, number of service users and geographies.

There is a significant issue of potential clients turning down offers of sheltered housing. This could be for a number of reasons. These could include lack of information about choosing the service, the quality of housing support available or the suitability of the housing. This indicates a major issue regarding accessing the service which should be addressed.

The numbers of withdrawals, of offers of sheltered housing is a particular issue in some branches. This requires to be explored, as potential service users may not be receiving appropriate assessment for the service. To better identify existing needs and potential unmet need, the service requires to improve, standardise and make more comprehensive the assessment process taking account of the housing, housing support and related care needs to ensure better targeting of services.

## **I. Strategic Relevance**

The housing support service strategically fits with the Scottish Executive's and North Lanarkshire Council's strategic priorities and is consistent with national and local planning arrangements.

The service's strategic relevance cannot be overstated as it plays a main part in delivering key features of both the Scottish Executive's national and North Lanarkshire Council's corporate priorities.

The primary objectives of the service are to provide housing support to older people, to enable them to sustain their housing status and live independently. Housing management services are also provided.

The service's aims and objectives complement other major plans and strategies including the Community Plan, Corporate Plan, Local Housing Strategy, Departmental Service Plan, Joint Health Improvement Plan and Joint Community Care Plan. Therefore the service should be seen as a major priority for continued Supporting People and HRA funding.

## **J. Communications Plan**

The service requires to develop a comprehensive communications plan taking account of issues such as access to IT resources, HSMS, E-care / Single Shared Assessment, developing better links between teams, how best to involve stakeholders, enabling good public relations and provide information to existing and potential clients.