

# Housing Learning & Improvement Network

Care Services Improvement Partnership **CSIP**

Health and Social Care  
**Change Agent Team**

## Unmet Housing-Related Support Needs in Wokingham District - an Investigation

Prepared by **Clare Skidmore**, for the Housing Learning & Improvement Network

### Lead organisation:

Wokingham District Council

### Lead contacts:

James Burgess, Wokingham Supporting People Team

### Key partners:

Wokingham Supporting People Commissioning Body

### Brief description:

This case study is based on the findings of a recent report on housing related support in Wokingham by Adrian Jones and Moyra Riseborough. It looks at a range of options identified to meet the gaps in meeting the housing support needs of older people and vulnerable adults and sets out key recommendations. With kind permission from Wokingham District Council.

### 1. Introduction – the strategic context

Housing-related support may be defined as support which has the following primary aim:

‘To develop and sustain an individual’s capacity to live independently in their accommodation’ (ODPM, ‘What Is Supporting People’)

In terms of Supporting People grant, this has been defined more clearly as support which promotes the life skills and understanding of the responsibilities of living independently in order to sustain accommodation.

In Wokingham, the concept of ‘independence in housing’ is defined as follows:

‘accommodation where the user has an ‘interest’ in the property (through a tenancy or ownership) with all the rights and responsibilities that flow from that, and the maximum degree of control over their living environment and who they share it with.’ (Supporting People in Wokingham: Eligibility Criteria).

The ‘Wokingham District Supporting People Programme 5 Year Strategy 2005 – 2010’ identified the need for greater provision of floating support, and for support provided to vulnerable groups to be more flexible. Subsequently, Wokingham District Council’s Supporting People team identified the need for assistance in analysing the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly with regard to the need for floating support. The following research exercise was commissioned in order to address this requirement.

## **2. Scope of the Research**

The Supporting People team wanted the research to concentrate on the following vulnerable groups, identified through the service review process as areas where there might be gaps in service provision:

- older people;
- people with a learning disability;
- people with mental health problems;
- people with physical or sensory disabilities;
- people with drug and alcohol problems.
- ex-offenders and people at a risk of offending and imprisonment;
- homeless people.

Other vulnerable groups are to be (or have been) covered separately.

A number of data collection methods were used, including collation and analysis of needs data already collected by the Supporting People team, and analysis of the actions taken by the Supporting People team since the 5 year strategy was agreed in 2005. Where data had not yet been collected, the research team carried out interviews with key individuals in the relevant service areas in order to identify needs and highlight further data gaps. Regional / national data was used to back up data collected locally. In the light of this analysis, the research team was asked to investigate the need for floating support services that cover the client groups identified, and finally to produce a report detailing the need for housing-related support, summarised in this case-study.

## **3. Client Group Analysis**

### **3.1. Older Peoples Services**

#### **Service gaps:**

The report concluded that current accommodation-based model of service provision was of benefit only for a minority of the older population. Furthermore it excluded the majority of older people who were owner-occupiers as well as the smaller proportion of older people who lived in private rented housing.

Gaps identified (including those not eligible for Supporting People funding) included:

- A lack of housing-related support for “vulnerable” people who are in danger of becoming homeless
- A lack of awareness of assistive technology
- A need for a neighbourhood information brokerage system
- A lack of 24 hour support
- A lack of local services designed to overcome loneliness e.g. the befriending service provided by Age Concern Berkshire in West Berkshire

- A lack of promotion of grants that are available
- Scope for the extension of the Home from Hospital scheme provided by Age Concern Berkshire
- Need for a gardening service
- Need for podiatry service
- The lack of Active Retirement Clubs
- Need for “Low level” support – someone to make “pop-in” calls to check if older people are ok. This might be linked too call service provision, if there is no one available in the “call hierarchy” to call in on a service user.
- Need for help with housework
- Need for help with maintenance (beyond the work of the Handy person service)

**Action Needed:**

The report noted that too much of the resource for Supporting People was concentrated on older people living in sheltered housing, and concluded that housing related support services should be extended to the wider older population.

A need was identified for floating support to assist older people with disabilities. Floating support for vulnerable older people faced with potential homelessness was also highlighted as an unmet, though hard to quantify, need. A number of other potential actions were identified to meet other areas of unmet need:

- i) an “at home” service covering (for example) benefits and advice and signposting available services/funding options;
- ii) a Home Improvement Agency service - to be introduced in partnership with two neighbouring local authorities in 2007/2008.

### **3.2 Services for People with a Learning Disability**

**Service Gaps:**

Key areas of housing-related support need identified by the research team were finances, occupation and accessing the community, cleaning and general health and well being.

**Action Needed:**

In the course of the research, the Community Team for People with a Learning Disability emphasised that they were providing (non Supporting People-funded) housing-related support for 20 clients, with a potential 30 more people needing this support. National data suggests that there is likely to be a much larger number of people with mild or moderate learning disabilities, many of whom may not be known to social services and some of whom may benefit from housing-related support. The data from the research suggested a need for at least one floating support worker (or the equivalent funding of existing staff to provide housing-related support).

*Improving estimates on need for services:* The research found that there appeared to be no agreed mechanisms between Social Services and Supporting People commissioners on how to estimate needs for services for this client group. The report recommended, therefore, that joint action be taken to identify and adopt an agreed mechanism for estimating need for services. Estimates should be fed to Supporting People on at least an annual basis for forward planning purposes.

*Improving joint working:* The report recommended that commissioners and stakeholders should consider the best way services could be developed in future to meet the needs of this client group. A key issue for the future is how the Supporting People resource could be used most effectively to do this.

The report proposed that Supporting People and other commissioners consider the role of generic support services, and seriously review the options, including:

- i) Ensuring that service specifications for generic support services include attention to the needs of service users with learning disabilities;
- ii) Commissioning housing related support tasks from organisations that already provide care or other services to individuals with learning disabilities.

### **3.3 People with Mental Health Problems**

#### **Service Gaps:**

Key areas of housing-related support need identified by Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) staff in the course of the research were: support with regard to finances, information, advice, support or short-term active assistance, general health and well-being, occupation and accessing the community and setting up a tenancy.

#### **Action Needed:**

In seeking to meet the housing-related needs of people with mental health problems, the report emphasised the need to acknowledge the following:

- i) That the housing related needs of people with mental health problems are extremely difficult to estimate, largely because most people cannot be described only in this way.
- ii) That the methods used to estimate need could be improved.
- iii) That too much of the Supporting People resource was focused on accommodation based services, although most people did not live in specialist accommodation and would benefit from floating support.

The data provided by CMHT highlighted the need for floating housing-related support. Based on this data two potential actions were identified:

- i) Creation of one or more service-specific floating support posts. Given the extent of need identified, a minimum of two such posts were required;
- ii) Given the crosscutting nature of much housing-related support need, the research suggested that CMHT might benefit from access to more generic floating support workers, whose remit would cross service boundaries.

### **3.4 People with Physical or Sensory Disabilities**

#### **Service gaps:**

Two key points were noted in the 5 year strategy as having an impact on the need for housing related support:

- Wokingham Occupational Therapists (OT) had a current waiting list of approximately 6 months before an OT could visit and carry out an assessment – reportedly there were more than 100 people on the waiting list.
- There was a need to support more people to remain in their own homes.

The report noted that the proposed Home Improvement Agency service and the extension of the handyman service to cover people with disabilities would help to address these issues.

Key areas of housing-related support need identified by care managers in the course of the research were: support with regard to finances, with occupations and accessing the community, and with travel outside the home. At the time of the research, care managers delivered the majority of this type of support, where provided, as there was no specific provision for such needs otherwise; and in many cases, it was felt that these needs were not being met at all.

Two other gaps in services identified through the research were (as per “Older People”) gardening and housework. Respondents said that these services were particularly needed where individuals were independent in other ways and as a result were not eligible for Adult Disability Team services. Further gaps identified were:

- Lack of information regarding “trusted” builders who could carry out odd jobs (i.e. jobs outside the remit of the handyman service);
- Need for advocacy for clients;
- Lack of floating support services for younger adults with disabilities.

#### **Action Needed:**

Given the estimated number of clients identified as needing housing-related support, organisations and individuals interviewed for this report largely welcomed the idea of more floating support services being provided. One new full time post was suggested by respondents for this client group. However, it was acknowledged that demand for support would probably rise as it became known that support was available. If a housing-related support post was created, Care Managers could refer clients needing such support to it, thus enabling them to concentrate on other aspects of their work, and reducing the waiting list for Occupational Therapy services.

### 3.5 Homeless People

#### Service Gaps:

Potential needs identified in the 5 year strategy included:

- More short-term provision for 16/17 year olds and, more specifically, the possible need for shared accommodation with a support package (leading to self contained accommodation in the future). [N.B. the Supporting People Team are currently commissioning floating support for 16-25 year olds].
- A possible need to expand the Private Sector Lease Scheme and, consequently, to consider the need for a housing related support service to run alongside it.

In addition to the above, the research exercise identified a gap in terms of support for those living in temporary accommodation.

#### Action Needed:

In order to meet the housing-related support needs of those living in temporary accommodation, two options were identified:

- i) Provide one ½ time post to work exclusively with tenants of the Oxford Road hostel – to support them whilst at the hostel and prepare them for living independently in permanent accommodation.
- ii) Provide one full-time post to work not only with tenants of the Oxford Road hostel but also with other people resident in temporary accommodation.

Additionally, a case could be made for using Supporting People funds to partially support the preventative work currently being carried out by housing staff where this could clearly be shown to relate to promoting “the life skills and understanding of the responsibilities of living independently in order to sustain accommodation”.

### 3.6 People with Drug and Alcohol Problems

#### Service Gaps:

Key service gaps identified in the report were the limited amount of coverage for people with an alcohol problem and the limited geographic coverage of the existing Tenancy Sustainment Worker post.

#### Action Needed:

The figures collected through the research regarding people with an alcohol abuse problem and attendant housing-related support needs indicated a need for further floating support. The report suggested that this might take one of two forms:

- A specific Tenancy Sustainment Worker post focusing purely on alcohol;
- An additional Tenancy Sustainment Worker post covering both alcohol and drug misuse – it was suggested that Supporting People funding could cover half the costs of both this and the existing post.

Other potential actions identified included a review of the referral process and the need for support for those moving on from accommodation-based services.

### **3.7 Offenders and those at risk of offending**

#### **Service Gaps:**

The 5 year strategy noted that half of the homeless offenders were unable to access local housing resources because there was no appropriate supported housing for those aged over 25 years old.

The Probation Service estimated that some 60% of those currently in prison have housing-related support needs. These needs were identified as:

- Lack of understanding of how to live independently and how to keep a tenancy e.g. lack of awareness of Housing Benefits;
- Finance and budgeting;
- How to behave appropriately and live in the community;
- Help with paying bills and filling in forms.

#### **Actions Needed:**

The 5 year strategy identified the following actions to address gaps in provision and improve the supply for offenders or those at risk of offending:

- Ensure floating support service is open to Offenders or those at risk of offending.
- Keep needs analysis under review each year to assess changing needs.
- Work on a cross authority basis to contribute to the National Probation Service Thames Valley's Supporting People strategy.

The data obtained during the course of the current research did not indicate a need for a housing-related support post to work specifically with offenders / those at risk of offending. The clear overlap of the needs of this client group with other service areas such as mental health and substance abuse did, however, indicate that ex-offenders and those at risk of offending might benefit from the provision of more "generic" floating support, with an holistic, cross-departmental approach.

## **4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

The research findings strongly indicated the crosscutting nature of many housing-related support needs. Overall, the report identified a need for more floating support as opposed to support that is accommodation based.

The research also found that some estimates of need were more certain than others. Indeed, a key problem identified was that needs data was not routinely collected, and so the report concluded that uncertain and poor data would persist unless all stakeholders took responsibility for systematically collecting data and for passing this to the Supporting People team.

Interviews in the course of the research suggested that many respondents still did not understand that Supporting People is expected to pay primarily for housing related support functions. There were expectations that Supporting People would plug gaps in

resources. In the light of this finding, the report emphasised that Supporting People cannot and should not be expected to fund services that are the responsibility of other services.

The report identified opportunities for Supporting People, health and social care services to be commissioned in a more integrated way. For example, Supporting People funds could pay for part of an officer's salary, with housing support-related tasks carried out as part of a wider job description. In this situation, the bulk of a salary would be likely to come from other budgets – such as from social care, health, housing or probation. Indeed, precedents for this sort of arrangement already exist in Wokingham. The report concluded that commissioners need to work more closely together to plan for the future and to provide services transparently.



Other Housing LIN publications available in this format:

Case Study no.1:	<b>Extra Care Strategic Developments in North Yorkshire</b>
Case Study no.2:	<b>Extra Care Strategic Developments in East Sussex</b>
Case Study no.3:	<b>‘Least-use’ Assistive Technology in Dementia Extra Care (Eastleigh)</b>
Case Study no.5:	<b>Village People: A Mixed Tenure Retirement Community (Bristol)</b>
Case Study no.6:	<b>How to get an Extra Care Programme in Practice</b>
Case Study no.7:	<b>Supporting Diversity in Tower Hamlets</b>
Case Study no.8:	<b>The Kent Health &amp; Affordable Warmth Strategy</b>
Case Study no.9:	<b>Supporting People with Dementia in Sheltered Housing</b>
Case Study no.10:	<b>Direct Payments for Personal Assistance in Hampshire</b>
Case Study no.11:	<b>Housing for Older People from the Chinese Community in Middlesbrough</b>
Case Study no.12:	<b>Shared ownership for People with Disabilities (London &amp; SE)</b>
Case Study no.13:	<b>Home Care Service for People with Dementia in Poole</b>
Case Study no.14:	<b>Intermediate Care Services within Extra Care Sheltered Housing in Maidenhead</b>
Case Study no.15:	<b>Sheltered Housing Contributes to Regeneration in Gainsborough</b>
Case Study no.16:	<b>Charging for Extra Care Sheltered Housing Services in Salford</b>
Case Study no.17:	<b>A Virtual Care Village Model (Cumbria)</b>
Case Study no.18:	<b>Community Involvement in Planning Extra Care: the Larchwood User’s Group (Brighton &amp; Hove)</b>
Case Study no.19	<b>Durham Integrated Team - a practical guide</b>
Case Study no.20	<b>BME Older People’s Joint Service Initiative - Analysis and Evaluation of Current Strategies (Sheffield)</b>
Case Study no.21	<b>Estimating Future Requirements for Extra Care Housing (Swindon)</b>
Case Study no.22	<b>‘The Generation Project’: a sure start for older people in Manchester</b>
Case Study no.23	<b>Developing ECH in Cheshire: the PFI route</b>
Case Study no.24	<b>Commissioning an ECH Scheme from Social Services’ Perspective - Leicester</b>
Case Study no.25	<b>Broadacres Housing Association Older Persons Floating Support</b>

The Housing LIN welcomes contributions on a range of issues pertinent to Extra Care housing. If there is a subject that you feel should be addressed, please contact us.

Published by:  
Housing Learning & Improvement Network  
Health and Social Care Change Agent Team  
Department of Health, 2nd Floor  
Wellington House  
135-155 Waterloo Road  
London SE1 8UG

[www.changeagentteam.org.uk/housing](http://www.changeagentteam.org.uk/housing)

Administration:  
Housing LIN, c/o EAC  
3rd Floor  
89 Albert Embankment  
London SE1 7TP  
020 7820 1682  
[housinglin@cat.csip.org.uk](mailto:housinglin@cat.csip.org.uk)