

# Park View: an 'Independent Living' scheme with support for individuals with a learning disability

Prepared for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **Yvonne Maxwell**

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South Tyneside Primary Care Trust  
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## Brief description:

This case study describes the development of five new build homes for people with a learning disability in South Tyneside. It details the key features, and shares the lessons learned from this in the hope that they will be useful to other commissioners and providers of housing & support services.

Key features of this scheme include:

- Two bedroom properties, two of which are wheelchair accessible bungalows.
- Creative use of assistive technology to support independence.
- Work with family carers.

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## **Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>1. Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2. Background</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>3. The scheme</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4. Local strategic context and evidence of demand for an independent living scheme</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5. Local commissioning strategy</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6. Finances</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7. Involvement of people with learning disabilities and family carers in the planning</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>8. Involving and engaging older family carers</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>9. Support for people moving in</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>10. Planning issues</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>11. Views of tenants and families</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>12. Philosophy of the scheme</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>13. Assistive technology</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>14. Eligibility criteria and nomination arrangements</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>15. Partnership issues</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>16. Role of Adult Social Care</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>17. Conclusions</b>	<b>13</b>

# **Park View: An Independent Living Scheme with Support for Individuals with a Learning Disability**

## **1. Introduction**

This case study describes the development of five new build homes for people with a learning disability in South Tyneside. It details the key features, and shares the lessons learned from this in the hope that they will be useful to other commissioners and providers of housing & support services.

Key features of this scheme include:

- Two bedroom properties, two of which are wheelchair accessible bungalows.
- Creative use of assistive technology to support independence.
- Work with family carers.

Names of tenants and family carers have been changed to protect people's identity

## **2. Background**

For several years the Department of Health (DH) has been funding a programme of extra care housing for older people. The programme is supported by the Housing Learning and Improvement Network (LIN) in the Care Services Improvement Partnership (CSIP) at the DH.

In 2004, the DH invited bids for a small, new programme of extra care housing specifically for people with a learning disability. It allocated £2.3 million to 10 projects that were to provide extra care housing specifically for people with a learning disability.

The ten schemes funded included all ages and a diverse range of housing options such as shared ownership, the private rented sector, new build RSL for rent and remodelling. Park View is one of the ten schemes that received funding.

Further information about the ten projects can be found in the report: *A Measure of Success: An Evaluation of the Department of Health's Learning Disability Extra Care Housing Programme*, available at:

<http://www.icn.csip.org.uk/housing/index.cfm?pid=520&catalogueContentID=2495>

The funding for the schemes was part of the wider learning disability policy context which included the Valuing People White Paper "A new strategy for learning disability in the 21st Century", (DH, 2001). This said:

- Housing was important – the aim is for a choice of where and how you live
- The Government want people living with their families to be able to plan for a home of their own
- People with learning disabilities can live successfully in many types of housing from individual self-contained properties, housing networks, group homes, and shared accommodation schemes, through to village and other forms of intentional community. They can cope with the full range of tenures, including ownership
- Local authorities should expand the range and choice of housing, care and support services
- All areas to have a housing strategy by 2003 addressing the aims of Valuing People

The messages from 'Valuing People' have since been repeated in the consultative Green Paper "Independence, well-being and choice", (DH, 2005) and then developed further in the White Paper "Our health, our care, our say" (DH, 2006). The latter confirms the Government's vision of "high quality support meeting peoples' aspirations for independence and greater control over their lives, making services flexible and responsive to individual needs" and "we will move towards fitting services around people not people round services".

*Valuing people now: from progress to transformation*, a consultation launched in December 2007, sets out the next steps for the Valuing People policy and its delivery. The priorities include:

- *Personalisation* – so that people have real choice and control over their lives and services.
- *Access to Housing* – housing that people want and need with a particular emphasis on home ownership and tenancies. This includes an increased focus on access to home ownership and housing with assured tenancies.

To further support the importance of housing there is a Public Service Agreement, PSA 16, to 'Increase the proportion of socially excluded adults in settled accommodation and employment, education or training'; this includes 'Adults with moderate to severe learning disabilities'.

[http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr\\_csr/psa/pbr\\_csr07\\_psaopportunity.cfm](http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/pbr_csr/psa/pbr_csr07_psaopportunity.cfm)

### 3. The scheme

Park View is a development of a new build independent living scheme, with support, of five dwellings comprising 3 terraced houses and 2 bungalows. It is for individuals with a learning disability who were previously living with older family carers in South Tyneside. This involved a partnership between South Tyneside Council, South Tyneside Primary Care Trust and Places *for* People (registered social landlord and provider of care and support).

In developing the scheme the Social Care and Health Directorate of the Council was supported by the following organisations:

- South Tyneside Primary Care Trust
- Supporting People Partnership
- South Tyneside Learning Disabilities Partnership Board
- Neighbourhood Services Directorate
- New Prospects Association Limited
- Learning Disabilities Carers' Reference Group
- Community Care Division – Revenue Funding
- Places *for* People (the housing association)

The homes comply with:

- Housing Corporation Scheme work Development Standards essential criteria
- Lifetime Homes essential criteria  
<http://www.jrf.org.uk/housingandcare/lifetimehomes/>

The design uses modern methods of construction to attain a 'Good' Ecohomes rating. Safety and security of the building and tenants are paramount, with individual telecare systems for risk management. Assistive technology is designed into the development to assist independent living and to maintain family links and support networks.

All homes have 2 bedrooms and are let on individual tenancies. There is design flexibility to allow two individuals with a learning disability to live together if preferred. The houses and bungalows are designed to provide general needs family accommodation, should the intended use no longer be required at some future stage.

The scheme has been developed on a 'brown field' site that was owned by the Council. This was sold to Places *for* People at social housing value for the purpose of this development.

An important aspect of the site is its close proximity to facilities. This will help people to live independently and to be part of the local community.

The following facilities are within 500m of the site:

- Bus stops to South Shields Town Centre, Newcastle and Sunderland
- Metro Station with service to South Shields, Newcastle and Sunderland
- Post Office
- GP Surgery and Health Centre
- Shops (newsagent, food store)

The following facilities are within 1000m of the site

- Park and recreation ground
- Leisure centre
- Place of worship
- Public house
- Restaurant

There is a major retail centre within 2 km of the site.

#### **4. Local strategic context and evidence of demand for an independent living scheme**

The bid was part of an overall strategy in South Tyneside to develop a wider range of housing options for people with a learning disability.

The planning for Park View was based on evidence that showed the need for additional independent supported housing in the Borough for individuals with a learning disability.

South Tyneside's 'Supporting People Needs Analysis 2004', was commissioned to bring together sufficient information to enable the Supporting People Team to plan future services. This document highlights that:

- Approximately 2,500 adults with a mild learning disability reside in South Tyneside.
- An estimated 328 people will need re-housing and/or housing related support in the next 5-10 years.
- Priority areas include: provision of specialist housing for people with dementia and provision for people moving out of homes with elderly carers.
- 39 people placed outside of the Borough who need to be offered the opportunity to return;
- 69 people housed inappropriately within the Borough; and
- 24 people in Local Authority homes which are now believed to be too big

The Council's Carer Development Worker reported that there were 59 families known to Social Care and Health Services where there was an elderly carer with a son or daughter who has a learning disability. The correct figure, however, is likely to be at least three times this amount. Not all families will be unable to cope, but, no doubt, the strain of caring for someone with a disability in a family grows as the carer(s) grows older.

Supporting People Interim Shadow Strategy highlighted the issues of people with a learning disability. The Shadow Strategy explains that current provision is at the very low end of the expected range, and that the vast majority of existing provision is provided within three large Social Services establishments. Specialist housing for people with a learning disability is therefore a priority area within South Tyneside.

The Supporting People Interim Shadow Strategy indicated that there was limited accommodation available within the Borough to meet the requirement of 'Valuing People' of, "enabling people with learning disabilities and their families to have a greater choice and control over where and how they live". Plans to tackle this included:

- Develop accommodation and services to be able to offer those currently living in inappropriate accommodation a range of accommodation and services to meet their needs
- To establish a sustainable programme of service development to be able to offer all individuals with a learning disability a choice in accommodation and tenure that will meet their needs.
- To establish flexible services that can deliver a full range of support to individuals with a learning disability appropriate to their needs, and that maximises their potential for independence.

## **5. Local commissioning strategy**

The local Commissioning Plan for Learning Disabilities recognised the complex issues around meeting accommodation need for this client group in a flexible and integrated way. It explained that a considerable proportion of total expenditure is used to support people in Supported Housing and Registered Care, but supply is limited and choice is relatively poor. This pushes costs up and a number of people are housed inappropriately or have to be placed outside of the Borough.

The plan included:

- Improve provision of specialist services within the Borough - including support for people with a learning disability who currently or usually reside with older family carers.
- Make home support services available to all, irrespective of where they live

The corporate services plan, 'Performing Together' 2004 - 2007 is the Council's master services plan and sets out how the Council will achieve its aims and objectives. In it there is a commitment to improving peoples' lives. Actions contained within this plan specify the development of supported accommodation for persons with a learning disability, with the 'Park View' highlighted as a site to assist in delivering this.

## **6. Finances**

The five properties were developed with a grant from the Department of Health at comparable levels to standard Housing Corporation Grant for supported housing.

Due to the high levels of assistive technology and specification for the properties the scheme was to be cross subsidised by the sale of adjacent bungalows being built for older people. Unfortunately the Housing Corporation did not fund 3 shared ownership units, and part of the land did not become available to build the outright sale properties.

Places for People were still committed to the Learning Disability scheme, and as a result of the financial issues re designed the scheme to remove the communal space, a move that has in fact proved beneficial to the overall scheme. Places for People closed the funding gap by committing charitable reserves to under write the development costs.

Places for People are happy to discuss the funding issues and costs in more detail with others who are looking to develop similar services.

## **7. Involvement of people with learning disabilities and family carers in the planning**

A Project Board was set up to develop and follow through the implementation of the bid. It linked in with the Learning Disability Partnership Board. The Partnership Board meets regularly to talk about opportunities and support for people with learning disabilities in the area. The Board is based on the principle of involving stakeholders and service users in the decision making process. Membership of the Partnership Board consists of representatives of council departments and health care providers, as well as up to six people with learning disabilities and six support workers.

There were two family 'older' carers on the project board. They were Jane, who has a daughter that lives independently in a house she shares with a friend, and Susan whose daughter lived with her. Over the course of the project Susan's daughter became one of the tenants. Both played a key role in engaging carers.



## **8. Involving and engaging older family carers**

One of the reasons for the ten sites having a criteria of working with older carers was that often people live with a carer for many years. They receive little input in terms of forward and person centred planning and then the carer either dies or is no longer able to continue to support them. This then results in a crisis, often resulting in the person not having the time to think through their future housing options.

South Tyneside has involved carers from early on. Prior to the bid being put forward, the Learning Disabilities Carers' Reference Group held three consultation events with older carers. The main comments to come from the three events were:

- “The Council should do more to involve and support older carers”
- General comments made about housing needs of people living with older carers and the lack of long term planning in relation to the care needs of dependents.
- Worries about what will happen to dependents after older carers die

In South Tyneside there were two very committed carer representatives. A key way to engage family carers is through the experience of others in the same situation. Susan was able to hear about Jane's experience as well as see the commitment of the team. This led to her seeing independent living as an option for her daughter. Both carers played a key role in building trust and engaging other family carers who had doubts and concerns.

A workshop for carers was held to show case the scheme and answer questions. Seventy older carers were invited but only twelve turned up. Two were very unhappy at the scheme and were vocal in this. The involvement of supportive carers has been utilised to answer these concerns. It is hoped that now Park View is up and running it can help with the wider work with carers in South Tyneside.

Although the focus should be on what the person with learning disability wants it needs to be recognised that it is important to gain the families' trust and engagement. Without these it can be difficult to reach the person and to work with them to look at their options and empower them to become more independent.

The work with families will continue when the person has moved. Often with older family carers needs are identified when the person moves out as they played a caring role as well. The older carer is likely to still want to have a supportive role to their son or daughter. Adult Social Services may need to look into support for the older carer. This may change and evolve over time and the roles both played will need to be recognised and support given. This has been the case with working with families of people who have moved into Park View.

## **9. Support for people moving in**

Places for People provide 20 hours of support. Social Care provide care packages as assessed.

At present none of the tenants receive direct payments or an individual budget. Both Social Services and Supporting People are looking closely at the possibility of moving to individual budgets for the tenants of this service. Supporting People (SP) are considering using Park View as a pilot scheme. With this in mind the current SP contract with Places for People has been initially agreed for one year.

## **10. Planning issues**

There were no planning objections. The area is a residential area, near shops, buses and the metro. It is on a piece of land that was already owned by Places for People. The plan, to help fund the scheme, was to build a few bungalows on the land that would be shared ownership for older people. The buildings are all in a close, on part of a residential road and do not look like 'special' housing.

## **11. Views of tenants and families**

All are very happy about the design and location of the homes. Most were pleasantly surprised at the size and having two bedrooms. One man, when shown the house, said he wanted to move in. He then asked 'which bedroom will be mine' as he assumed he would have to share with another person. All have enjoyed buying furniture and making their homes their own.

A view expressed by some families is that they are glad they are around to support their son or daughter in their move to independence. They can see them growing in confidence and there is less of a worry as to what will happen to them when they are no longer around. For example:

Jeanne's mother, Susan, has been a keen member of the project group from its inception, but was adamant from the start that she was there as a carer representative, and that this scheme would not be suitable for her daughter. Her involvement with the project opened her eyes to the possibilities, (her daughter was always keener as long as she could take her dog), and Susan gradually came to the view that she had to be more open about Jeanne's future options and came to the position where, having resolved a number of issues, she needed to allow Jeanne to move on.

Susan is very pleased now with her daughter's move. Her daughter Jeanne is very happy with her new home and is enjoying the independence. She has brought her dog with her and has enjoyed making it homely.

## Quotes

Martin: "I have settled in well. I like it here it's nice and quiet. I get upset when my mum gets upset as she misses me at home but I like it. I like having my own key to my own house."

Roger: "I prefer living here to where I used to live it is nice and quiet here. I used to have noisy neighbours and I did not like it. I now have a nice place to live and get all the help I need from my carers and support workers."

Peter: "I still enjoy living here as I can do what I want when I want. I like the area it is close to the metro for me to get to work. I am managing well with the help from staff and I have managed to report some repairs myself to the contact centre. I feel I am doing very well here and I am proud of what I have achieved."

## **12. Philosophy of the scheme**

The properties are in a close that looks like any other new development.

The people who have moved in are tenants and the aim is to support their independence.

The idea was very much that people were individual tenants and not part of some sort of 'extended group home'. People may make friends with neighbours, but they may not, just as any of us in own neighbourhoods.

One of the original plans was for a communal room. This did not happen due to finances but with hindsight the team felt this was for the best. There was still a culture in parts of the services of trying to build a community in the way of a group home. Social workers set up some social events prior to people moving in, so they could get to know each other. This is a difficult issue. It seems that the social events were a bit awkward. They all had their own friends, family and network already and did not necessarily want to socialise with others because they happened to have a learning disability. The view of the support workers and team at Places for People was that it was very much up to individuals how much contact they had with their neighbours and that they were not planning to try to create a group atmosphere apart from a neighbourhood watch group, which is a feature of many neighbourhoods. This is more an issue of their rights as tenants.

### **13. Assistive technology**

The use of new build, coupled with a team that was keen to be creative and innovative, presented opportunities to really support the independence of people with learning disabilities.

When planning the assistive technology the need to both reassure carers and maintain links was an issue that led to the decision to use webcams. Each flat had a specially designed flat screen with a webcam, positioned in the hallway to ensure it was not intrusive. The tenant could turn it on and off. It is powered by a Personal Computer (PC) placed in a cupboard that could also be used to add on various AT and telemedicine options if required. The DH funding covered the purchase of the screens and PCs and for those carers without them the purchase of a PC, and some training, for them. This technology is often used by people to keep in touch and it is thought it could help reassure both parties. The tenant though is able to switch it off and the purpose is not to monitor them.

#### **Assistive technology utilised in the scheme:**

- Bungalows are wheelchair accessible and with a wall between the bedroom and bathroom that can be removed (knock through panel) to allow access and reinforced ceilings for hoists if needed. The idea is to future proof them. The two gentlemen who have moved into them are older and have some mobility issues. One uses a wheelchair sometimes and it is felt both will need the more accessible accommodation as time goes on.
- Electric opening kitchen windows were fitted in the bungalows. This meant people in wheelchairs can reach the switch rather than reach over the kitchen surfaces to open it.
- Dispersed alarm – fire and flood. If there is a fire the cooker shuts down. The idea was for the whole kitchen to shut down, but there was a misunderstanding with the electricians. Some effort was needed to make them understand the specific needs of the residents. For instance they initially placed the electric window-opening switch by the window, missing the point that it was needed to help someone unable to reach the window. (houses and bungalows)
- Webcam in the hallway. The PC with Broadband, linked to the screen, is in a cupboard in the hall; it is unobtrusive. This could also be used for telecare and health care. There has been training for relatives as well as tenants. Relatives that did not have a computer were given one.
- Entry system linked to the phone which is hands free. (houses and bungalows)
- Switches next to windows which could be used to open the curtains if needed. (house and bungalows)
- GPS/mobile phone. This is a simple to use mobile phone. There are three speed numbers and an emergency SOS. People choose who to

calls in an emergency. It works down the three numbers and also recognises if it is an answer machine it has got through to. The person can either ring or pull out the lanyard in an emergency. The phone has GPS tracking and the person called is able to locate where the person is via text and PC.

### **Telecommunications issues**

There were delays with setting up phone lines and broadband connections. Each individual was to have their own contract, as tenants. The problem was that since they had not lived alone they did not have credit histories. Places for People had difficulties dealing with this. With hindsight they would have allowed more time to set up the communications to avoid delays. One option that would have saved time would have been to set up a business account under Places for People and then transferred it over to each tenant. This of course is not ideal but would have saved time.

The issue of past credit histories also affects setting up utilities more generally. The support worker has been able to help with this and looking at options such as direct debits and pay as you go.

### **Costs of assistive technology**

- Interactive broadband connection, including web cam, and touch screen PC £1230.00 per unit, plus a further £430.00 where we provided the PC for the family home.
- Location finder £199.00 on a pay as you go.
- Cost of additional wiring to each unit for background technology, retro fit of door openers and additional future proofing etc £2100 per unit.
- Monthly cost of broadband connection to new build and family home £30.00 a month.
- Monthly cost of monitoring the system @ £20.00.

Places for People have funded the first 2 points, capital costs for IT and the location finder, SP are covering the revenue costs.

## **14. Eligibility criteria and nomination arrangements**

In order to ensure that people who are offered tenancies within the scheme receive an appropriate level of support from the statutory services and that there is equality of access, prospective tenants were considered by the Council's Priority Needs Housing Group. This group comprised of the Council's Housing and Social Care Directorates along with Primary Care Trust representatives, determines the allocation of supported accommodation across the Borough, informed by a formal assessment of an individual's social care and health needs and their current support arrangements.

In partnership with Places for People, the Council will have 100% nomination rights for the life of the scheme.

The identification of potential tenants was the role of care managers. The design of the properties and the extensive use of AT meant that people with complex needs, including physical needs, could be met. The people who have moved in generally have low to medium needs, though one gentleman has complex health problems and uses a wheelchair. Social Care, through their identification of tenants, limited it to low/medium needs. Although the people who have moved in will benefit, it is a missed opportunity to show that people with complex needs can be supported to live independently, especially when the property and assistive technology have been designed with that in mind.

## **15. Partnership issues**

The bid was the result of a very strong partnership between the RSL, Places for People, and the PCT and Social Services. Much of this was down to 'champions' who saw the importance of housing in supporting independence, were committed to looking at new and innovative ways to achieve this and were very committed to working in partnership. A key role in this was a joint Social Care and PCT commissioning post. Both the post holder and Places for People have been very keen to share the learning and practice widely, attending events and meetings to discuss their work. Following on from the reorganisation of three PCTs into one in South Tyneside, the joint post now purely became a PCT one. Consequently this left Places for People as the key agency that had to take the lead without the original key players and in a time of reorganisation. In addition, Adult Social Care was also restructuring at this time and there were budget issues which meant that the joint post was no longer funded.

The PCT was not part of the partnership for the bid, but through the joint role there was a link that was a bonus. That said the scheme shows what good partnership and commitment can achieve and hopefully this will enable strong partnerships to be rebuilt and feed into the local learning disability housing strategies. A new Social Care Commissioning Manager is now in place and she has worked hard to re establish the partnership arrangements.

## **16. Role of Adult Social Care**

One care manager was identified to work with the scheme .She co-ordinated the identification of tenants through the team and attended the project board. The progress of the scheme coincided with many changes in both the PCT and social care. This has meant a lot has been expected of the care manager whose had been given responsibility for the tenants and changes of personnel at a more senior level.

There have also been slightly differing views of the philosophy of the scheme, as discussed elsewhere in this case study.

## 17. Conclusions

### The main challenges have been:

- Identifying suitable tenants, with an issue around the Local Authority view that they needed to nominate people with low support needs due to budgetary constraints. The properties were to a high specification and with an assistive technology base could have housed people with higher support needs.
- Working with the parents of the tenants to help them to a point where they were willing / able to let go.
- Keeping the partnership with the Local Authority on track during two restructures of social care.
- Developing some of the technology as they went along, i.e. touch screen web cam connectivity etc, and impact this had on staff time.
- Making the capital funding stack up due to lack of Housing Corporation funding for the adjacent bungalows for older people.
- Problems with the telecommunications provider getting the broadband installed.

### Opportunities:

- Development of closer links between the RSL and the Local Authority and Health, subject to 3<sup>rd</sup> point above.
- Opportunity to pilot new way of working.
- Development of working group with wide spread of involvement, including service users and families.
- Able to develop and install systems that the RSL had previously only had a theoretical understanding of.
- To showcase the project at several conferences, 5 to date, and by giving other Local Authorities the opportunity to visit the scheme (13 so far).
- For the tenants this has proved a massive opportunity to move their lives to a different level.
- Able to demonstrate that Assistive Technology is a viable option for people with a Learning Disability.
- Places for People have seen this scheme as part of a wider strategy for them and it is high profile in their group. It has helped them in looking at innovative uses of AT and supported accommodation and they are looking at lessons learned and what is transferable to other work they are undertaking.

**Risks:**

- Funding of scheme, Places for People had to find significant additional capital to finance the scheme.
- For the families the letting go has been difficult.

**What would have been done differently?**

- They have built 2 of the units to full disability standards, (at significant cost) but facilities are under used due to nature of referrals; they needed a greater buy in by the Local Authority around the level of need for both support and care for potential tenants to fully utilise the units.
- Involved the telecommunications provider earlier in the process.
- Ensured greater revenue funding certainty earlier in the project (this was partially due to personnel changes in LA). This was resolved.
- Realised the level of staff input required was higher than anticipated.

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Other Housing LIN publications available in this format:

- Case Study no.1: **Extra Care Strategic Developments in North Yorkshire**
- Case Study no.2: **Extra Care Strategic Developments in East Sussex**
- Case Study no.3: **'Least-use' Assistive Technology in Dementia Extra Care (Eastleigh)**
- Case Study no.5: **Village People: A Mixed Tenure Retirement Community (Bristol)**
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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.

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