



Independent Living with Care: Giving greater choice as you like it

This Case Study showcases the Independent Living Scheme with care for people over 55 years at Briar Croft, Stratford-upon-Avon. It highlights both the design aspects that make the scheme so attractive for older people and the ways in which the personal care improves the quality of life for residents, including those with dementia.

The development consists of 64 self-contained one and two bedroom apartments with a range of communal facilities. It offers 18 apartments for shared ownership and 46 for rent, giving older people a choice of tenure.

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Introduction

Briar Croft is a specialist Independent Living with care scheme for the over 55s. Residents live in their own self-contained spacious apartment and have the benefit of extensive communal facilities within the scheme. Residents are actively encouraged to take control over their own lives and live independently as far as they are able.

Briar Croft was the first Extra Care housing scheme in Warwickshire and is the flagship Independent Living scheme for Orbit Heart of England.

Built on the site of an existing sheltered housing scheme, Briar Croft was designed by architects Walker Troupe, developed by Orbit Homes and built by Bullock Construction. It was developed in two phases with the first phase completed in 2008. Once the first phase was complete the residents were moved into the new building and the existing sheltered accommodation was demolished to make way for phase two.

The £11 million scheme received £2.3 million funding from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) toward the second phase, and was completed in 2010.



The front of Briar Croft, Stratford-upon-Avon

Site

The original sheltered scheme was popular with residents but it was not fit for purpose so the decision was taken to replace it with Orbit Heart of England's first Extra Care housing scheme.

The scheme is located on a main road, 10 minutes' walk from the town centre, on a local bus route and lies opposite a doctors' surgery. Its position within the town helps residents to feel engaged with the local community and was a deciding factor in the change of use for this site.

Layout

The communal areas, accessed by the residents and the local community, are located on the ground floor. There are also two meeting rooms on the first and second floor. The use of the meeting rooms is carefully managed, as they are opposite the kitchen windows of some apartments.

There is a residents' lounge on the second floor, which provides exclusive space away from the communal areas. There are windows at the end of each corridor to enhance the feeling of light and space. Each floor has been painted a different colour and has an individual theme to make it easy for residents to find their way around the scheme.

Doors open from the restaurant/dining area onto a small patio area at the front of the building. Gardens surround the building and are maintained by a gardening club started by the residents and supported by a contract gardener.

Residents, family and friends are free to come and go as they please at Briar Croft. However, the scheme is designed to ensure residents live in a safe and secure setting.

Community facilities

Briar Croft is an 'activities based' scheme and has many interest groups and events for residents. The use of the communal facilities by members of the local community helps to keep Briar Croft a vibrant and exciting place to live. The staff will continue to work with the local community to open the access to an even wider audience.

Communal facilities at Briar Croft include:

- Restaurant/diner, with a varied menu choice
- Hairdressers
- Well-being suite
- Fitness suite & games room
- Shop
- Winter garden reading room
- Multi-purpose entertainment & cinema room
- IT & library suite
- Communal laundry
- Assisted bathrooms
- Two lifts
- Terrace
- Guest room
- Buggy store



Communal facilities at Briar Croft

Briar Croft employs an Activity Co-ordinator who works with the residents to provide a wide range of activities, including activities for older people with memory loss.

Briar Croft is also used as a hub for local community and voluntary groups who use the facilities. These include:

- Local stroke association
- Line dancing
- Age UK
- Alzheimer's Society
- Local Health Authority
- Doctors' partners



Site layout at Briar Croft

High standard of care



Many people live full and active lives well into the advanced years of retirement age. However, care is available at Briar Croft as and when it is needed. This ensures maximum independence and dignity at all times.

A domiciliary care provider is on site 24 hours a day. Daytime hours are covered by 10 staff, with two working from 10pm to 7am every night.

One member of staff will cover from 4.30pm to 9.30pm. The morning shift requires a senior worker who spends some time off shift to support other staff.

The housing team works closely with the on-site care provider to ensure that residents have access to a seamless service. Daily handovers take place with weekly meetings to discuss any issues or concerns.

Apartments

There are 36 one bed apartments and 28 two bed apartments.

Each apartment is built to the Lifetime Homes Standard:

- Fully accessible with full mobility
- Secure by design
- Code for Sustainable Homes level four
- Wet rooms in the bathrooms
- Space-saving kitchen doors that slide into the wall
- Kitchen windows look onto the corridor
- Ceilings are strong enough for a ceiling track hoist to be fitted
- Some apartments have Juliet balconies
- Views to garden areas
- One area in the garden has been changed to accommodate boule for the residents
- Large windows allow for maximum daylight.

Criteria for entry into Briar Croft

Briar Croft is aimed at people aged 55 or over who have a connection to the Stratford-on-Avon District.

This is a balanced profile of low, medium and high care (one third at each level). This balance is controlled by the Support Provision Manager. The properties are advertised on Choice Based Lettings and all interested parties' applications are discussed by the Allocation Panel comprising:

- Health
- Housing
- Social Services
- On-site Care Provider senior team leader

The panel looks at both the care and housing needs of the older people who have applied for housing at Briar Croft. The final decision will be made by the Support Provision Manager, fulfilling the current level of need to ensure that the scheme remains well balanced.

Dementia support in Independent Living with Care

Orbit Heart of England has produced a Dementia Strategy called 'Laying the foundations for living well with dementia' which will help to ensure that all the activities that take place at Briar Croft are inclusive to all residents.

- A Dementia Café successfully operates at another Orbit sheltered scheme and there are plans to launch one at Briar Croft.
- Events are organised as part of Dementia Week.
- Orbit Heart of England has identified a member of staff as a Dementia Champion.
- The organisation has signed up to a Dementia Charter and it will be displayed at all its schemes.
- Orbit Heart of England will continue to develop its offer to residents with regards to Dementia.



Residents at the Dementia café

What's working well?

Briar Croft is a very popular scheme and attracts a large number of visitors - people interested in living at the scheme, and those who want to use the wide range of communal facilities.

Briar Croft has proved a great success with existing and new residents. The community has worked well together and the building, despite being developed in two phases, has quickly become a cohesive and joined-up scheme.

And finally, in the light of this, Orbit Heart of England are looking ahead to develop a further three Independent Living with Care schemes:



St Bedes in Bedford, under construction

St Bedes in Bedford will offer 104 apartments – 53 for shared ownership and 51 for rent. It is being built in two phases. The first phase will be completed in July 2013 and the second phase in November 2013.

Queensway Court in Leamington Spa will provide 178 apartments – 90 for shared ownership and 88 for rent. It is due to be completed in January 2015.

Southam Development – Orbit Heart of England is working in partnership with Southam Town Council to build an independent living with care scheme offering 75 apartments - 36 for shared ownership and 39 for rent. The development includes the construction of a replacement library, a community hub and neighbourhood office.

Note

The views expressed in this paper are those of the authors, and not necessarily those of the Housing Learning and Improvement Network.

About the Housing LIN

Previously responsible for managing the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund, the Housing LIN is the leading 'learning lab' for a growing network of housing, health and social care professionals in England involved in planning, commissioning, designing, funding, building and managing housing, care and support services for older people and vulnerable adults with long term conditions.

For further information about the Housing LIN's comprehensive list of online resources and shared learning and service improvement opportunities, including site visits and network meetings in your region, visit: www.housinglin.org.uk

The Housing LIN welcomes contributions on a range of issues pertinent to housing with care for older and vulnerable adults. If there is a subject that you feel should be addressed, please contact us.

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