

Supporting Independence and Integration for Disabled People: Foundations for Living Project, the Papworth Trust, Huntingdon.

Prepared for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **Simon Evans**, University of the West of England, Bristol

Brief Description

This case study describes an innovative scheme that integrates affordable, accessible homes with private flats, as well as a range of key mainstream services for disabled people across housing, support, employment, education and community integration. In 2008 the Foundations for Life Project won a Housing Corporation Gold Award for Building Cohesive Communities.

Background

Recent years have seen an increased acceptance of a social model of disability in the UK, as reflected by a number of policies and strategies that promote independence for disabled people. These include the recent Independent Living Strategy, Office for Disability Issues (HMSO 2008), *Independence, Well-Being and Choice* (DH, 2005), The 1990 *Community Care Act* and *Valuing People* (2001). There is also a greater awareness of the role of accessible housing in terms of promoting independence and social inclusion, as demonstrated by the Government's aim for all public sector housing to be built to Lifetime Home Standards by 2011 as set out in the *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods*, a National Strategy for Housing an Ageing Society (CLG, 2008).

These standards, and accompanying Star Rating system, specify a range of features that improve access for disabled and older people, including doorways and corridors that allow for wheelchair access, gentle sloping access to properties and electric sockets and controls at convenient heights. However, there is still much to be done in terms of addressing the housing needs of disabled people in the UK. For example, it has been estimated that by 2020 only 12% will meet Part M of the Building Regulations (2000), which state that reasonable provision should be made for people to gain access to and use a building and its facilities.

Similarly, few planning authorities have set targets for levels of accessibility in new build housing despite a need for a further 371,000 accessible homes in the UK. In 2005, *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, a report from the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, identified a range of barriers that disabled people commonly experience, including unsuitable housing, a lack of accessible transport, high levels of unemployment and low skills. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that much residential care is located in rural areas that are disconnected from wider communities, opportunities and services.

The Papworth Trust

The Papworth Trust is a disability charity and a registered social landlord which helps over 13,000 disabled people every year in the East of England and the UK through a wide range of services covering employment, housing, learning for life and work, personal support and vocational rehabilitation. The Trust employs around 300 staff (of whom about 20% have declared a disability), works with 40 volunteers and has an annual turnover of about £14m. A core part of the Trust's mission is to champion the need for greater provision of wheelchair accessible housing, both through working with the Government, employers, service providers and commissioners to promote disability equality and good practice and through developing innovative schemes. One such scheme is Foundations for Living (FIF) in Huntingdon, Cambridgeshire, which demonstrates how inclusive design principles can be embraced as part of mainstream developments.



Saxongate Community Centre and Housing

The Foundations for Living Project

The project started in 2001 as a result of the decision that the Trust's rural residential care scheme in the village of Papworth Everard was no longer fit for purpose and did not meet the requirements of the Care Standards Act (1990). Consultation with disabled tenants indicated that many felt isolated due to the village location and poor public transport and would prefer to live in an urban setting with better access to employment opportunities, shops and other services. This led to the aim to create a scheme that fully integrates affordable, accessible homes with private flats, as well as a range of key mainstream services for disabled people across housing, support, employment, education and community integration.

A key feature of this project is a town centre location that can provide opportunities for integration with the local community. One challenge was finding a commercial development partner, largely due to the unusual nature of the project and concerns that the high build costs would make it difficult to make a profit. Eventually a partnership was formed with Hill Residential and ultimately the scheme was a success for the developer in terms of the sales value of the private apartments and the speed of sale.

The project comprises 24 affordable rented wheelchair accessible flats, 22 private flats and the Saxongate Community Learning Centre, all located close to each other in the centre of Huntingdon. The housing is spread across 2 residential blocks and the top floor of the community centre. Flats are all fully accessible and are designed to exceed both Lifetime Homes standards and Housing Corporation Scheme Development standards. The range of design features includes wide corridors and doors, level access showers, height adjustable kitchen hobs and sinks, easy-to-access sockets, alarm/intercom systems, remote control curtains and assistive technology as required. One of the two housing blocks is mixed tenure, combining social rented housing for disabled people on the ground floor and privately owned apartments on the floors above. Of the 24 accessible flats across three sites, 18 were occupied by people who moved from Papworth Everard (8 from residential care and 10 from supported housing in the village). The remaining 6 flats were occupied by disabled people living in and around Huntingdon who needed accessible housing.

The first tenants moved in during 2005 and the final flats in the 3rd housing scheme were occupied in 2007. The initial tenants were selected by the Papworth Trust but the County Council now has 100% nomination rights. Individual support is provided as required, including personal care, housing support and community support. Personal care is provided by another organisation under contract to the County Council. Support needs of tenants range from a few hours a week to 24 hours a day. Care and support needs have reduced for tenants since moving in, partly due to increased independence and the new skills that have been learnt, including money management, shopping and cooking. For example, there was a reduction in average support from 23 hours per week in 2005 to 1.7 hours per week in 2008.

As well as reducing care costs to the local authority, the project has also meant that many tenants are financially better off. For example, many are financially independent and have easy access to a bank account for the first time, while employment programmes are helping people consider paid work for the first time. However, it is important to note that moving from residential to independent living accommodation has moved responsibility for support costs from each individual's home County Council to Cambridgeshire County Council.

The Saxongate Community Learning Centre is an innovative and fully accessible space for disabled and non-disabled people including businesses, community groups and Huntingdon Regional College. Facilities include two IT suites, an art room, an accessible kitchen, two rooms with height adjustable interactive whiteboards, an atrium café and a hot-desking area. The centre is well-used by the Trust's tenants and the local community. A range of factors demonstrate its success:

- During the first year there were 9579 visitors overall and 2529 disabled people attended meetings or training.
- Of the 45 students that enrolled on college courses in Sept 2007, eight had a disability.
- Papworth Trust Employment Programmes at Saxongate supported 430 people
- Local businesses made use of accessible meeting facilities and staff worked with the hate crime equalities officer and students on a drama project to raise awareness of hate crime against disabled people.

Overall there has been good initial uptake of courses by the general public, including people with disabilities, but some office space is empty and the Trust continues to look at new ways of working.



All flats are fully wheelchair accessible

As well as demonstrating good practice in accessible design and integration, this project is also a good example of comprehensive user involvement and support. Features of this approach include:

- A long term consultation process with residents living in residential care.
- The identification of a desire among many individuals to move to a more urban location with better access to shops, community facilities, volunteering and employment opportunities.

- Support for residents throughout the process by the staff team and an independent advocacy service to ensure their views were accurately reflected and incorporated into the project;
- The development of individual plans which captured residents' aspirations for the future.
- The inclusion of disabled people as part of the project management team responsible for the new scheme.
- Setting up a Transitions Team to support people through the move, including familiarisation trips to Huntingdon and support to use shops, transport and other services for the first time.
- Tenants produced a video diary and spoke at public events, including the official opening ceremony.

Research findings suggest that tenants are very positive about the project and feel that their independence has greatly increased along with their overall quality of life.¹ This was felt to be largely due to the town centre location and having their own home. Tenants also report increased social interaction compared to their previous setting, through maintaining existing friendships while also developing new ones. Some tensions have been identified between the desire of the Trust to maximise community use of the learning centre facilities and resources and some tenants wanting high levels of support.

Costs

The total cost of the project to the Papworth Trust was £7.5 million, including £4.3 million from Papworth Trust reserves, £1.2m from land sales, and £2 million from a dedicated fundraising campaign (mostly from grants, trusts and individuals). This figure does not include the private housing, the cost of which was met by the private developer and recovered from private sales. The scheme was not eligible for a Housing Corporation grant because the social housing element was re-provision of existing residential care.

Learning Points

- Foundations for Living is an innovative and imaginative scheme that demonstrates how services can be delivered in a way that makes them accessible to all while increasing quality of life and independence for disabled people. The project has contributed towards a guide to developing inclusive communities.²
- High levels of user involvement, consultation, advocacy and support at all stages of the project are key features of its success. This was also key in

¹ Tom Ling and Edward Nason (2006). Supporting Independent Living for Disabled People: An evaluation of the Foundations for Living Project. RAND Europe. www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR388/

² The Papworth Trust Guide to Developing Inclusive Communities. www.papworth.org.uk/publications.php

identifying that not everyone wanted to move from their existing rural setting. Of the 32 disabled people living in the Trust's residential care that was being closed, 8 ended up moving into the new scheme while the others moved to new supported housing in the village or moved away to be nearer family/friends.

- Accessible design is crucial to supporting independence and equality for disabled people. This includes internal design, external design and the use of assistive/adaptive technology.
- A town centre location brings major benefits in terms of integration with the local community and can also help challenge perceptions and attitudes towards disabled people among retailers, employers and wider society. For example, some local shops have become more accessible and have sought advice on employing disabled people.
- The fact that Huntingdon town centre was already relatively accessible, with a level, pedestrianised high street, is a factor in the success of the project. Not all town centres would provide such a suitable location for a similar project.
- Moving from residential care to independent living can require a high level of initial support. The Transitions Team played a key role in helping residents adapt to their new situation and developing personalised plans.
- It is vital to collaborate with a wide range of partners and stakeholders from the start with this kind of innovative project. Papworth Trust worked with a wide range of groups to raise awareness of the project and its objectives, including voluntary organisations, the local college, schools and MPs.
- The incorporation of a Community Learning Centre in the project had a major impact in terms of providing a focal point for tenants and attracting local organisations. For example, the involvement of a local college draws people into the centre, from where they can then access training, employment support, etc.
- This project raises two particular financial issues that are likely to discourage organisations from considering similar schemes. One is the fact that a move from residential to independent living accommodation shifts responsibility for support costs from the commissioning or home County Council to the authority in which they are resident. The second is that projects that are seen as re-provision of social care do not qualify for government grant funding.
- There are high costs associated with building on town centre sites to high accessibility standards. However, building private flats alongside accessible affordable housing didn't appear to have a negative impact. Flats sold quickly and attracted a premium for their town centre location.

Contact Details

Gail Cunningham, Communications Manager, Papworth Trust

T: 01480 357259 (direct)

F: 01480 357201

E: gail.cunningham@papworth.org.uk

www.papworth.org.uk/goldaward/index.php

Thanks go to the staff and tenants of the Papworth Trust for their contributions towards this case study.

Other Housing LIN publications available in this format:

- Case Study no.20: **BME Older People's Joint Service Initiative - Analysis and Evaluation of Current Strategies (Sheffield)**
- Case Study no.21: **Estimating Future Requirements for Extra Care Housing (Swindon)**
- Case Study no.22: **'The Generation Project': a sure start for older people in Manchester**
- Case Study no.23: **Developing ECH in Cheshire: the PFI route**
- Case Study no.24: **Commissioning an ECH Scheme from Social Services' Perspective - Leicester**
- Case Study no.25: **Broadacres Housing Association Older Persons Floating Support**
- Case Study no.26: **Unmet Housing-Related Support Needs in Wokingham District - an investigation**
- Case Study no.27: **Dee Park Active Retirement Club - Age Concern Berkshire**
- Case Study no.28: **Essex County Council Older Person's Housing Strategy (Summary)**
- Case Study no.29: **Pennine Court: Remodelling sheltered housing to include Extra Care for people with learning difficulties**
- Case Study no.30: **Dementia Care Partnership: More Than Bricks and Mortar**
- Case Study no.31: **Anticipating Future Accommodation Needs: developing a consultation methodology**
- Case Study no.32: **Park View: an 'Independent Living' scheme with support for individuals with a learning difficulty**
- Case Study no.33: **Private Sector Leasing Scheme for People with Learning Difficulties in Norfolk**
- Case Study no.34: **Mini-Cost Model of Housing with Care Project**
- Case Study no.35: **Ledbury Community Health and Care Centre**
- Case Study no.36: **Duddon Mews Extra Care Scheme for People with Mental Health Problems and Physical Frailty in Cumbria**
- Case Study no.37: **Private Sector Engagement with Extra Care Housing Development**
- Case Study no.38: **Healthy Outcomes in Blackburn and Darwin's Extra Care Housing**
- Case Study no.39: **Implementing an Extra Care Housing Strategy in Oxfordshire - Delivering System Change**
- Case Study no.40: **Combining Extra Care Housing with Health Care Services at Barton Mews**
- Case Study no.41: **Integrating Retirement Villages with the Local Community at Painswick**
- Case Study no.42: **De-Commissioning & Decanting Sheltered Housing at The Manors**
- Case Study no.43: **Reeve Court Retirement Village: Block Contracting Care in Bands, & Individual Budgets**
- Case Study no.44: **Vertical Housing with Care: Remodelling a tower block as extra care housing at Callendar Court, Gateshead**

The full list of Case Studies can be seen and downloaded at our website:

www.networks.csip.org.uk/housing

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
CSIP Networks
Wellington House
135-155 Waterloo Road
London
SE1 8UG

Tel: 020 7972 1330
Email: housing@csip.org.uk

www.networks.csip.org.uk/housing