

“Housing with care: current knowledge, future policy”

JRF seminar – 27 November 2008

Summary of key issues and areas of discussion

Marketing/understanding

- HWC (Housing with Care) is not a panacea and will not solve everything! Need to go beyond the crude assumption that ‘HWC is good’ and ‘care homes are bad’.
- HWC itself is a very broad church – no one model will meet all needs/aspirations. Retirement villages are only one model within HWC.
- HWC caters for a very wide range of aspirations, ages and needs.
- So how should we promote/ market HWC - what is ‘the offer’? And what can we learn from the private sector?
- Need for better information for the public, to ensure accurate expectations.

Investment/ commissioning

- What is the best use of money (the ‘marginal pound’) in the context of the current recession? If HWC is as costly, or maybe more costly, than other ‘options’, how can we argue it is affordable?
- Should the focus be more on outcomes than on costs and assets? Need for more comparative evidence on QOL outcomes in domiciliary care, care homes and HWC.
- HWC is very vulnerable to changing funding regimes
- Need to future-proof schemes – danger of just designing new institutions?
- Remodelling of sheltered housing is not necessarily a cheap option, especially when future-proofing is factored into the equation - but it does offer significant benefits to existing residents
- What can we learn from the private sector (e.g. about location of schemes)?
- HWC may eventually ‘oust’ residential care homes (though this is questionable) but is very unlikely to replace nursing homes (though targeted intensive community nursing input may make this more possible)
- How can public, private and third sectors in a locality work together to plan comprehensively for the housing offer to an older population which has different levels of resource available to them, and different needs for care and support?

Regulation

- Need for greater clarity/ consistency from the regulator (current tensions, e.g. between ‘messages’ from local v national inspectors)?
- Could regulation be more outcome-focused?

Community or neighbourhood?

- What is the interaction between schemes and the local neighbourhood? Are we/should we be aiming to design 'communities', or 'age-friendly neighbourhoods'?
- Do HWC schemes risk becoming 'playpens for the elderly'? Or does HWC cater for such a wide age group that 'age segregation' and homogeneity are unlikely to be an issue?
- Most schemes have a mix of 'fit and frail'... how can we prevent hostility/resentment towards residents with the highest needs? Do staff have a role in educating residents e.g. about disability and dementia?
- Need for more research on impact of 'pepper-potting' (mixed tenure).

Workforce issues

- What specific support do HWC staff need?

Choice, control and diversity

- Real tensions in HWC between the housing agenda (with its focus on more choice) and the social care agenda (with its tightening eligibility criteria)
- We don't know yet if HWC can be a home for life. How do/ could/ should schemes deal with dementia and end-of-life?
- HWC must address the diversity of the ageing population. Need to assemble more data on minority groups.
- Schemes need to develop more flexible care (less task-based, and with cover at nights) to enable residents to make best use of what is on offer.
- How can the needs of those with sight impairment be fully addressed?

Research

- Importance of involving range of disciplines
- Hard to compare data from different schemes if there is no standardisation