

Callendar Court Gateshead

Extra care housing for older people in a remodelled 11-storey tower block, which also provides a resource for the surrounding area.

The 40 one- and two-bedroomed flats are owned and managed by public sector provider Housing 21. The concept of the scheme is to be part of the community, open and welcoming to local people on the Beacon Lough estate.

Gateshead Council provides the care via a 24/7 community based service. The scheme is fully fitted with community alarms. Housing 21 provides laundry and housework facilities. There are also shop and restaurant staff, the building manager and front line care staff.

The building was funded with a grant from the Department of Health extra care programme and from Housing 21's own funds. It was completed in 2006. The architect was Edwin Trotter.

Key features

- The remodelling of a council tower block to provide extra care housing on 11 floors. Each storey of the building acts as a small cluster of flats which means that residents with dementia can find their way around easily.
- The block is well integrated with the local community and provides extensive on-site facilities for residents and local people as well as a base for delivering services to the community. The scheme works well, although it could do with more toilets on the ground floor.

Background

More local authorities are remodelling²¹ existing sheltered housing or care homes as extra care housing to meet government objectives for promoting choice and independence without the costs of new build. This is also an effective way to 'recycle' hard-to-let social housing. Callendar Court replaced housing that had originally been designed as general accommodation without any special facilities.

The alternative to remodelling was demolition and selling the site or leasing it to Housing 21 to build a new facility. The estimated cost of demolition was approximately £600,000 and the cost of building a new extra care scheme from scratch was around £3.7 million.

Design

A major feature of the re-modelling has been the addition of a ground-floor extension. The new entrance opens into this area, which houses a range of facilities that are open to residents and local people, including a lounge, café, lifts, laundry, guest room, hobby room, shop and hairdresser. The extension also houses the scheme offices, the kitchens, a wheelchair store and toilets. Callendar Court has two wheelchair-accessible flats, both of which are on the ground floor. The facilities are well used by residents of this close-knit community, which helps to make the court feel integrated with the estate in which it sits. Further facilities are available nearby, including bus stops, a social centre, general store, post office and a GP surgery. The nearest town centre is Gateshead, approximately one mile away.



Development and building issues

Each of the 10 storeys above the ground floor contains four flats with either one or two bedrooms. Two storeys also have a common room. The central area is taken up by two lifts (one stops only at even number floors, the other only at odd numbers), a stairwell and a service area.

Feedback

Residents are happy at Callendar Court and particularly like the panoramic views across Gateshead. One wheelchair user chose a flat on the top floor for this reason, rather than one of the designated wheelchair flats on the ground floor. The layout creates a domestic feel to the scheme, with each storey serving as a small cluster of four flats. This also seems to work well for residents with memory problems, who find it easier to negotiate than the long corridors commonly found in new-build extra care schemes. The fact that the two lifts serve different floors has not proved to be a problem.

Learning points

A wide range of factors needs to be taken into account when re-modelling any existing form of housing as extra care, including planning requirements, building standards and costs.

Consultation with all interested parties is crucial. Particular consideration should be paid to the views, needs and preferences of existing residents, including how they will be re-housed and/or the impact of the work on their living environment. Any decisions to remodel should take full account of all existing

strategies at district, county and regional levels, including those that specifically relate to older people and/or housing.

Imaginative approaches to renovation can transform unsatisfactory buildings into environments that give residents a good quality of life. In the case of Callendar Court, a hard-to-let tower block has become a popular extra care scheme that is integrated into the local area. A key factor in this success has been the addition of a ground-floor extension, which provides a range of facilities for residents and the local community.

This vertical model of extra care works well and residents express high levels of satisfaction. This design has brought unanticipated advantages for residents with dementia because each storey of the building acts as a small cluster of flats which is easy to navigate.

Design and architectural features

- The remodelling of a council tower block to provide extra care housing on 11 floors.

Points for residents

- The block is well integrated with the local community and provides extensive on-site facilities
- Each storey of the building acts as a small cluster of flats which means that residents with dementia can find their way easily.

Management issues

- Successful remodelling schemes do require careful consultation with residents and their involvement throughout the process.

21 A recent study identified the benefits that can be achieved by remodelling. These included higher levels of tenant satisfaction, greater accessibility and better facilities. A number of potential problems were also highlighted, including tensions between tenants and limited opportunities to socialise. The researchers also identified several unanticipated issues that often arose. The costs of conversion were often much higher than expected, space standards and design specifications for new build were not met and the disruption to tenants was considerable. They concluded that while remodelling can appear to be the best overall option, there are major challenges.

Tinker A, Hanson J, Wright F, Mayagoitia RE, Wojgani H and Holmans A (2007) *Remodelling sheltered housing and residential care homes to extra care housing: advice to housing and care providers*. Research report. King's College London and University College London, London, UK (unpublished) tinyurl.com/mgknzf.