

Implementing an Extra Care Housing Strategy in Oxfordshire - Delivering System Change

This case study offers an overview of Oxfordshire County Council's experience in putting their Extra Care Housing Strategy into practice, drawing on interviews with key Council players and their partners.

Prepared for the Housing Learning and Improvement Network by **Martin Cooper**

Background

There is a lot of good practice guidance and tools advising Local Authorities on how to develop an Extra Care Housing (ECH) strategy and what to include within it on the Housing Learning and Improvement Network website. However, less attention has been paid to what is involved in implementing such a strategy to deliver real system change. This case study therefore focuses on what were the drivers for changing hearts and minds? What levers and incentives produced the shift in thinking and a new commitment to developing ECH as an alternative to residential care?

This case study reports the early phases of Oxfordshire County Council's (OCC) experience in delivering their ECH strategy by exploring a number of aspects of change management from the different perspectives of the key players and stakeholders. It also briefly touches on the monitoring of progress and preparations to evaluate the outcomes of the strategy.

The case study adopts a pragmatic approach to change management advocated by the National Audit Office and the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit. Creating lasting change can be complex and difficult. Success depends on setting a clear strategic direction based on an explicit plan and backed up by senior level commitment to creating the change.

The case study looks at critical aspects of

- Giving Leadership from the Top
- Addressing Behaviour and Culture
- Engaging your stakeholders
- Communicating
- Designing the Change Programme and Managing the Change Process

Aims

The case study will aim to help other Local Authorities to: -

- Deliver their ECH strategies
- Realise the benefits of the policy change
- Win the arguments for ECH and encourage closer co-operation between agencies
- Understand the level of resources and commitment required to work through the key steps in delivering system change.

Methodology and Key topics for interviews

Interviews with the key OCC players and their partners

Each respondent was asked about their role in their organisation and the part they played or are playing in implementing the ECH Strategy. The focus of the subsequent questions was on what they understood to be the key features of the strategy and what persuaded them to support the County Council's approach. This was expected to provide useful feedback on the success with which OCC was communicating its vision and enlisting the support of the key stakeholders.

The Oxfordshire Context

- One of the principles underpinning the original strategy is that an effective and successful Extra Care Housing Strategy can only be developed if it is anchored firmly within the context of Oxfordshire, which is a County consisting of market and small towns with large rural areas around them. The exception is Oxford City itself which, apart from being a university city of world renown, has developed into an urban area with the associated urban issues. The strategy must be developed taking account of the issues and agendas of all the relevant stakeholders as well as, of course, Oxfordshire's older people themselves.
- The Oxfordshire Housing Market Assessment has stressed the need for District Housing Authorities to pay more attention to planning for older people.
- Extra Care Housing is above all a housing solution for older people. The role of the District Housing Authorities (as well as the County Council, the Primary

Care Trust and Registered Social Landlords) within the County is therefore critical for the successful implementation of an Extra Care Housing Strategy. The County-wide Extra Care Housing Strategy must be an integral part of the development of local Housing Strategies and sub-regional Housing strategies.

- There has been a history of strained relations between the County Council which has often been about the Districts desire to focus on local issues and aspirations rather than necessarily pursue an anti-County council agenda. There is now a clear willingness to work in partnership to deliver the Extra Care Housing strategy.
- OCC has enjoyed a very strong relationship with the Primary Care Trust have developed large pooled budgets for older people's services and good collaboration in the production of the Joint strategic Needs Assessment.
- Developing an Extra Care Housing Strategy for older people will deliver a broad range of affordable housing options and community facilities
- The subsequent stages of developing an Extra Care Housing Strategy will involve consulting a wide range of communities to identify the specific opportunities that will need to be built into a programme. This consultation work will include working closely with planning officers.
- Developing Extra Care Housing is an important strand to delivering the County Council's strategic shift away from residential care. It will increase the choices available to older people, including owner-occupiers who wish to retain an equity stake in their accommodation
- Developing the wider private market through the use of planning powers
- Enabling older people to have more disposable income will have an impact on local economies and in making local communities more sustainable.

The District and City Councils and the County Council, will need to consider the best use of and value from their land and assets as part of an overall strategy for the development of Extra Care Housing with a reasonable balance between ownership, mixed equity and social rent. The availability of Social Housing Grant is likely to be limited. Developing a mixed tenure approach will be necessary if Extra Care Housing schemes are to provide affordable housing to both former social housing tenants as well as to owner occupiers on low incomes with limited capital resources, such as older people living in Right to buy properties.

Drivers of the need for change and Leadership from the top

The essential prerequisite is to create a vision of the future that all the key players can understand and own. This is achieved by taking critical "ideas" as the basis for policies and then building the "politics" to deliver the agenda.

The three key elements of the OCC policy drivers are: -

- Demographic challenge will outstrip the capacity of existing services
- Financial pressures are likely to increase
- Need to radically transform social care services to meet older people's changing expectations

The Big Idea which sets the scene for and drives the need for change is that the “current pattern of services is simply **not affordable** as the basis for meeting the needs of future generations of older people”.

Oxfordshire County Council has taken the explicit policy decision that it does not want to buy residential care on the current scale as it sees the need for more specialist nursing home care and a major diversion into extra care housing.

Acceptance of the policy has been achieved because politicians can see that Extra Care Housing is a good product; has a good consumer response; meets older people’s aspirations to live in their own home and there is no increase in the level of risk compared to residential care.

The politics of securing the change of direction are closely tied to value for money and longer term financial stability. This is a good news story that allows the County Council to paint a picture of grappling with the enormous strategic challenges in an innovative but safe and secure way.

Leadership has been provided in a number of ways to shape this idea into different policies and then give it political expression in terms of a Cabinet decision to change the direction of service provision in Oxfordshire.

The key change has been to address head on the issue of giving voters and citizens what they want, which is to be able to stay in a home of their own for as possible.

“We have to make available for older people a better range of suitable housing options. Residential Care does not provide a home.”

Using the Local Area Agreements and Public Service Agreements has enabled OCC to raise the profile of the idea of citizenship rather than service user. This has in turn led to a subtle change in the view of the role of the local authority which becomes one of making available the opportunities to enjoy good housing environments, appropriate housing options and the right care services.

There is a concern, which is not often directly expressed, amongst those who are less enthusiastic about Extra Care Housing that it represents a lowering of standards. These concerns have been tackled by giving absolute commitments to making access to 24 hour care available and providing the relevant communal facilities in schemes.

The lesson from the Oxfordshire work is that logic and rationality is not enough. ECH is a good product which will largely sell itself but attention has to be paid to structuring the political debates and working the networks to allow this to happen. It has taken two years of sustained work at Directorate level to set the policy infrastructure; to develop a strategy and secure a commitment to deliver on the strategy; and work is ongoing as specific local and tactical concerns emerge from the delivery of specific schemes on the ground.

Address Behaviour and Culture

There are three aspects which are critical to delivering the strategy: -

- Managing care pathways
- Establishing the County Council’s role in enabling housing development

- Building on a “creative tension” between the two tiers of local government

Oxfordshire’s experience is typical of many places in meeting resistance from staff including senior practitioners, who will still prescribe Nursing Home care without testing out alternative housing options. To be fair there are legitimate concerns about the local availability of ECH and how local schemes will deal with higher levels of need.

The existing Extra Care Housing services can demonstrate the quality, reliability and effectiveness of the new service model vis a vis Residential Care to win the hearts and minds of the social workers / care managers, GP’s and in due course hospital consultants. Once people can see ECH in operation they recognise that it provides greater freedom; promotes independence and provides a very good alternative to institutional forms of care.

Delivery of the new services has to go hand in hand with tightening access to care homes by introducing more stringent checks and balances to ensure that housing options are properly pursued. This puts the decision making in the short run in the hands of committed managers charged with delivering the County Council’s targets. This approach is part of a strong performance management culture.

This is not just a social care issue. Changing the culture of working with corporate colleagues and strategic housing and planning partners is just as important.

Corporate colleagues in Oxfordshire County Council’s Environment & Economy (E&E) Services have come to understand the significance of developing ECH schemes for the financial future of the County Council. They recognise that if the transformation of older people services is not delivered then many other plans are threatened.

E & E have engaged in working with Social and Community Services (SCS) staff on developing a more strategic approach to land assembly, capital subsidies to ECH schemes and influencing the District Councils’ Local Development Frameworks. There is an emerging corporate line on the need for capital subsidy to make ECH developments work. This approach fits with the overall responsibility to “sweat the assets” but introduces new technical solutions. The case for doing so is on a straightforward value for money basis. Disposal of sites which are subject to Affordable Housing planning requirements have a lower market value than pure open market sales. Equally, affordable housing providers cannot pay open market prices because of target rents. However, it is possible to produce a better long-term return to the local authority by committing a capital subsidy to help deliver and secure nomination rights to the ECH scheme because the revenue savings on the care budget are sufficiently attractive.

Two tier local government leads to tension between the authorities. Oxfordshire is no different from anywhere else in this respect. The County Council is working in collaboration with the Primary Care Trust and with the Districts to help them shape their older people accommodation strategies along the lines set out in “More Choice, Greater Voice” by contributing detailed local data from the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, mapping the sheltered housing provision to identify local investment priorities – encompassing the work of Supporting People programme, working to influence the local land use planning policies and identifying opportunities for investing land in replacing existing sheltered housing and residential care provision, which will attract a county subsidy.

County Council Officers have worked hard to engage with planners in a series of district level meetings as well as contributing to a Countywide Planning Group. This group is led by the Primary Care Trust and was established to consider the implications for health and care of housing development. Oxfordshire is facing the development of 50,000 new homes which will substantially increase the pressure on local services. Extra Care Housing is firmly on this policy agenda. Involvement in the Local Development Framework (LDF) processes has been essential. Firstly, there are the technical issues of agreeing the core policy statements and numbers that set out requirements for new schemes and development sites in the formal policy documents. Secondly, it has been crucial in influencing and raising awareness in a part of local government that hitherto has not been that aware of Extra Care Housing as part of the older people's housing agenda.

The County Council is not a housing authority but it has recognised the importance of working with all the districts in a member level Housing Partnership, supported by the Housing Officers' Group.

All the Districts have agreed that Extra Care housing is an important part of the future housing mix for older people. They are exploring the ways of securing the ends by a flexible set of approaches. Working in partnership in this way offers the Districts opportunities to refresh their sheltered housing stock. It also offers opportunities to link existing schemes more closely with care providers to create "virtual Extra Care villages".

Engage your stakeholders

Oxfordshire have worked with a range of stakeholders to deliver the strategy: -

- Consulting key players through a range of means including – holding People's panels, working with Age Concern and other 3rd sector bodies to gain service user and wider Older People population's views of future needs and wants; holding village days, etc.
- Using the existing network of meetings such as the Oxfordshire Housing Partnership and Housing Officer meetings to establish an agreed policy framework
- Establishing formal governance arrangements for managing the partnership
- Working with Planners and Housing colleagues to agree a common population planning data set so as to avoid difficulties in setting the LDF policy statements and subsequent negotiations with developers.

Oxfordshire County Council have recently decided to invest in a specific post to support and develop detailed partnership arrangements and working with the Districts, both housing and planning, and the RSLs. The lack of capacity in this area of work has been an acknowledged problem.

Two-tier local government complicates decision making because housing and social care responsibilities are split. Nevertheless similar central vs. local tensions exist even in single tier authorities when considering the relative merits of investing in different neighbourhood localities or debating the relevance of a single policy to radically different communities in the same local authority area. The reality is that we need both levels of decision making.

OCC is working to have an open debate about consistent and transparent decision making that recognises the importance of equity within an overall countywide priority framework whilst respecting detailed local knowledge.

OCC has established a set of arrangements to manage and deliver the Partnership at both the County and the local level.

County Policy Board – comprises Elected Members from all LAs, OPCT and a Service User representative. The board reports to Health and Social Care Wellbeing Board as part of the LAA structure and provides political leadership across the partnership. The County Council’s ECH Programme Sponsor, an Assistant Director responsible for Major Projects advises the Board.

County Programme Board – senior officers from the partners to deal with technical issues such as nomination rights agreements, design and service specification issues, capital contributions, procurement strategy; develop policy guidance for Members; set the implementation framework and monitor local implementation as well as the overall delivery of programme targets

District Implementation Groups – comprises local politicians, District Council staff, local ASC staff and local Age Concern. The Groups are there to assess local needs, identify local sites, consult local communities; drive the implementation of local schemes

County ECH project team – OCC Programme Director with assistance from a Project Manager and other OCC Finance and Property Asset Management staff as necessary.

The delivery of the ECH strategy in Oxfordshire has to be set in the context of Phase 2 of the Oxfordshire Care Partnership’s proposals to replace 8 residential care home homes by new ECH schemes and some specialist Nursing Home facilities. This means that subject to the successful renegotiation of the long term contracts that a substantial new provider of Extra Care Housing will emerge for Oxfordshire.

The County Council is also in the early stages of working to identify other strategic RSL Development partners because it wishes to avoid being totally reliant on the piecemeal approach of tendering and administering the bidding for individual schemes. OCC will of course want to continue to work with housing associations/registered social landlords (RSLs) looking to invest in their own stock to create new ECH schemes.

The more strategic approach to procuring new schemes is one that the Housing Corporation has shown an interest in working with in other regions. OCC recognises the need to hold further detailed conversations with the Regional staff at the Housing Corporation to establish the possibility of adopting a similar approach across the new Oxfordshire housing sub region.

Communication Strategy

This is a complex project to deliver and it is essential to “Keep the messages simple”. The core messages are two-fold: -

- OCC are keen to develop ECH to provide more suitable options for those older people whose accommodation is not well suited to coping with increasing frailty and loss of mobility.

- OCC are not keen to see more RC developed – they want to see more specialist NH provision developed and reduce their reliance on RC.

Whilst the Programme Director provides a focal point for the partners to ask questions and raise concerns, there is also a need for product champions at different levels of the organisation to bang the drum for ECH and to raise it at the appropriate points in agendas for all strategic planning / partnership meetings.

Partners have complimented OCC for the good job in launching and publicising the ECH Strategy through a County Conference and a series of district level meetings. There is a need to continue to routinely communicate activity on the programme. It is important to celebrate successes such as the award of Department of Health Extra Care Housing Grant of £1.6m for a scheme in Banbury.

Delivering the programme will involve many apparent quiet periods as well as phases of high profile public developments and achievements. Partners also need to know what else is going on behind the scenes and have suggested supplementing routine newsletters and briefings with holding an Annual ECH Conference to keep the ECH Strategy at the top people's agenda and to cement their commitment to the programme.

This is a 20 year programme and the journey will involve many twists and turns. It will be important to keep all partners informed about progress and emerging issues as the programme is rolled out.

Design the Change Programme and Manage the Process

The County Council has adopted the mantra of “proper preparation prevents poor performance” to guide its work on transforming its services. The Social and Community Services Directorate has established a Change Management Board chaired by the Cabinet Member or the Director to drive the change. It is part of a significant investment in formal project management, which has required the preparation of a detailed Project Initiation Document (PID).

Working on the PID has revealed the true scope of the work involved. OCC has a programme with a Programme Sponsor (at Assistant Director level) and a Programme Director, who is assisted by a Project Manager with additional staff associated to the programme at key stages.

The sensible use of the Project Management protocols does not require slavish devotion to detailing a project plan. It should require a set of immediate targets for the next 2-3 years, more general targets for the 5-10 year planning horizon, a high level time line backed up by more detailed Action plans, capable of being measured and monitored.

It is a critical role of the Project Sponsor at Director or Head of Service level to monitor delivery against targets and to check progress against the long term view.

The balance is to introduce a disciplined approach to project delivery and the commitment of adequate resources by all the partners without the project team becoming so pre-occupied with updating the plan that nothing else gets done!

Monitoring the programme and evaluating the outcomes

This aspect of the programme delivery needs much deeper thought and detailed development but as a general principle it will fit easily within the existing Performance Management framework, which is being jointly developed with the PCT to test the effectiveness of services. 2 main approaches to outcomes monitoring: -

Seek customer feedback from OP about their needs and satisfaction ratings with services – focus groups, surveys, specific consultation exercises

Proxy measures – Age on Admission to registered care homes; number of people supported at home (compared to registered care); Emergency admissions to hospital, etc.

Overall messages from the Case Study

The key learnings from OCC's early experience of leading and steering the delivery of their ECH strategy is the need to pay attention to the politics and keep an open and imaginative approach to seizing the opportunities that are constantly thrown up by a changing housing market.

Working the politics of leadership is about “presenting the argument in the right way at the right time” and addressing head on the legitimate concerns of the doubters and opponents of the strategy.

There is no one model answer given the range of communities being served and the different starting points in terms of existing services, site opportunities, etc. A flexible response within a consistent county or authority-wide framework is much more likely to produce the best progress.

The message of this case study is the need to have the key ideas that deliver and have the links to the practical work of strategy, plans, and governance

References/other useful publications

The National Audit Office and the Cabinet Office Strategy Unit both have helpful websites, see links below, which contain a wealth of information and guidance about managing change in the public sector: -

http://www.nao.org.uk/change_management_toolkit/index.htm

<http://interactive.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/survivalguide/>

Extra Care Housing Toolkit, CSIP Housing LIN (2007)

More Choice, Greater Voice: a toolkit for producing a strategy for accommodation with care for older people, CSIP Housing LIN/CLG (2008)

How to get an Extra Care Programme in Practice, CSIP, Housing LIN Case Study Number 6

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)**
Case Study no.6: **How to get an Extra Care Programme in Practice**
Case Study no.7: **Supporting Diversity in Tower Hamlets**
Case Study no.8: **The Kent Health & Affordable Warmth Strategy**
Case Study no.9: **Supporting People with Dementia in Sheltered Housing**
Case Study no.10: **Direct Payments for Personal Assistance in Hampshire**
Case Study no.11: **Housing for Older People from the Chinese Community in Middlesbrough**
Case Study no.12: **Shared ownership for People with Disabilities (London & SE)**
Case Study no.13: **Home Care Service for People with Dementia in Poole**
Case Study no.14: **Intermediate Care Services within Extra Care Sheltered Housing in Maidenhead**
Case Study no.15: **Sheltered Housing Contributes to Regeneration in Gainsborough**
Case Study no.16: **Charging for Extra Care Sheltered Housing Services in Salford**
Case Study no.17: **A Virtual Care Village Model (Cumbria)**
Case Study no.18: **Community Involvement in Planning Extra Care: the Larchwood User's Group (Brighton & Hove)**
Case Study no.19: **Durham Integrated Team - a practical guide**
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**

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

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

www.icn.csip.org.uk/housing