

# Pennine Court: Remodelling sheltered housing to include Extra Care for people with learning difficulties

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**Brief Description:**

This Case Study describes the development of extra care housing opportunities for older people with learning difficulties within a conventional sheltered housing scheme in Salford. It details the key stages and features of the development process, and shares the lessons learned from this in the hope that they will be useful to other commissioners and providers of housing & support services considering/involved in:-

- remodelling sheltered housing
- developing extra care for people with learning difficulties
- integrating provision for people with learning difficulties with *mainstream* provision for people as they age.

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## Introduction

Extra care is increasingly recognised as an effective and appropriate model of housing and support provision for people with learning difficulties, being well placed to support and realise the *Valuing People* principles. As thinking has changed and we have become more innovative in the way we deliver housing and support services, priorities such as promoting and maintaining independence, ensuring choice, promoting social inclusion, and integration into mainstream society have become more prominent. Extra care is a concept that seeks to embrace all of these principles.

This Case Study describes the development of extra care housing opportunities for older people with learning difficulties<sup>1</sup> within a conventional sheltered housing scheme in Salford. It details the key stages and features of the development process, and shares the lessons learned from this in the hope that they will be useful to other commissioners and providers of housing and support services considering or involved in:-

- remodelling sheltered housing
- developing extra care for people with learning difficulties
- integrating provision for people with learning difficulties with *mainstream* provision for people as they age.

## Background

In December 2004, a Salford partnership made a successful bid to the learning disabilities element of the Department of Health's Extra Care Housing Fund Grant programme for 2005-06. The bid essentially comprised the remodelling of part of an existing small (23 unit) sheltered scheme to provide four extra care housing units and related facilities for older people with learning difficulties. This was to be complemented by, and integrated with, the remodelling of the rest of the scheme by the landlord, English Churches Housing Group, with a view to moving it along the continuum towards extra care.

The partners to the bid were the Salford Joint Learning Difficulty Service, Salford Housing Services, and English Churches Housing Group (now part of the Riverside Group) with the support of Salford PCT.

Salford's was one of ten successful bids to the ECHF programme for people with learning disabilities and older family carers. A grant of £225,000 was awarded towards the remodelling costs for the four units for people with learning difficulties. This was complemented by the input of some £100,000 by English Churches Housing Group as part of its £760,000 expenditure on the first phase of its planned upgrade of the whole scheme.

The bid fitted within Salford's vision and forward strategy for housing and support for people with learning difficulties, called *Widening the Choice*. (A 2007/2012 update of this, which builds further on its vision and principles, was launched in July 2007.) That vision was, and is, to work towards a future in which:-

*"...adults with learning difficulties living in Salford will have a good quality of life, living as valued members of the community in housing of their choice and with support suitable to their individual needs."*

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<sup>i</sup> *Learning difficulties* is the term that service users in Salford have chosen to describe themselves. It is used throughout this Case Study except where referring to literature or experience from elsewhere when the term current in that particular context is used.

The strategy to realise this vision recognised, among other things, the inadequacy of the previous *one size fits all* shared house/supported tenancy model and the need to develop provisions that can better support people with learning difficulties becoming increasingly frail as they age. In this context, a key priority was to:-

*“...widen the choices available to people with learning difficulties....  
and develop innovative housing solutions to meet individual needs.”*

### **The Bid – Moving On : Making Space**

The project was intended to demonstrate how choices could be increased for people with learning difficulties and their carers and unnecessary admission to more dependent settings be avoided. It was particularly driven by:-

- belief that the choices available to people with learning difficulties as they age should link more closely to the broad range of housing and support services for older people
- recognition that existing older people’s services need support in developing their services to cater appropriately for the leaning disabled older population
- recognition that people with a learning difficulty may develop early onset dementia and that existing services have difficulty meeting their needs appropriately - this had been identified as a particular pressure by the learning difficulty service
- recognition that, like other people, as they grow older people with a learning difficulty may find that their existing homes do not meet their needs – for instance for ground floor, accessible accommodation.

In the above context, and from the earliest stages of developing the bid onwards, the importance of the (prospective) new learning disabled tenants being integrated into the life and culture of Pennine Court was emphasised.

The project was also grounded in a recognition of the importance of partnership working between:-

- commissioners, housing providers and support agencies - to provide a more flexible range of housing and housing with support options, which in turn make better use of other health, care and support provision, for people with learning difficulties as they grow older
- commissioners and the providers of services for both older people and people with learning difficulties – to ensure that the needs of people with a learning difficulty are acknowledged within wider services for older people.

### **Reconfiguration of Pennine Court**

The overall plan was to reconfigure a traditional largely bedsit sheltered scheme that, despite being well-located, had a history of being difficult to let.

The scheme comprised 21 bedsits, 2 one-bedroom flats and an integrated scheme manager’s house plus a small common room/lounge, kitchen, laundry and a lift to the first floor. An L-shaped two storey building, it occupies a small and constrained site along a side road but close to facilities and has a private garden away from the road.

The plan was to relocate the scheme manager off site and to reconfigure and slightly extend the whole building to provide 15 one-bedroom and 2 two-bedroom flats and improved communal facilities to extra care standards. Four of the ground floor one-

bedroom units were to be designated for older adults with learning difficulties, who would receive an extra care service. The redevelopment would include modernisation of services and redecoration throughout and create additional communal facilities including:-

- a remodelled and more clearly identifiable entrance with electronic doors operated by fobs
- a secure wheelchair/buggy store with charging facilities
- Housing Corporation 2003 Scheme Development Standards (frail elderly) / wheelchair standards throughout
- a new lounge/common room with adjacent tea kitchen, conservatory, and toilet suitable for people with disabilities/wheelchair users
- a second smaller lounge/dining room with kitchen\*
- assisted bathing room\*
- new laundry\*
- improved storage
- installation of an assistive technology platform throughout
- space for individual washers or washer/driers within flat kitchens
- a scheme manager's office
- office/sleep in room with en suite shower/WC to allow 24 hour staffing to the people living in the four learning difficulty units\*
- new fire alarm system
- improved and resurfaced parking with designated parking spaces for people with disabilities – although the overall space was to be reduced, rationalisation of layout was to create additional spaces.

Apart from the scheme manager's office, these were all to be located on the ground floor.

The Department of Health grant related to the conversion, decoration and fitting out of the four units designated for people with learning difficulties together with appropriate assistive technology and certain facilities (the starred items in the list above) particularly associated with the extra care service for these tenants.

Contractors started on site in January 2006 and Phase 1 was completed in December 2006. This created all the communal facilities planned, the scheme manager's office, and nine one-bedroomed flat, including the four intended for people with learning difficulties. It left 12 bedsits. The timing of the second phase which would convert these is now unclear following the recent merger of English Churches Housing Group with Riverside.

The new learning difficulties tenants moved in on January 8<sup>th</sup> 2007. All Department of Health targets were met.

### **Managing the Process**

As will be clear, in its totality the plan for Pennine Court involved reducing the number of units from 21 to 17 and the allocation of four units to new tenants with learning difficulties. Despite its history of lettings difficulties, Pennine Court had only one vacancy at the start of this project. This meant that seven units needed to be freed up either through normal turnover or through existing tenants moving elsewhere. Incentives – compensation payments plus the costs of removal, carpets, curtains and redecoration - were offered to facilitate this process.

It was originally thought that it would be necessary to decant residents while work was in progress. However thinking shifted, largely because of tenants' lack of enthusiasm for this approach, and it was decided that with a two phase approach it would be possible to manage the project with residents in situ. However, this approach clearly meant that there would need to be some movement around the scheme to enable the work to take place.

Because of the limited time frame within which the proposal was developed and the considerable uncertainty about whether the bid would be successful, the existing tenants did not know about the proposal until the grant had been awarded. With hindsight, and although it would have created a lengthy period of uncertainty and anxiety, this is thought to have been a mistake.

As seems to be the usual experience, there was considerable resistance to the plan for the scheme when it was first shared with the tenants. However, as elsewhere, residents' lack of enthusiasm was driven by the anticipated (and actual) disruption involved rather than by lack of conviction about the need to improve both the flats and the facilities at the scheme – or, in this case, by any resistance to the proposal to include specific provision for people with learning difficulties.

Tenants recognised that people thinking of moving to sheltered housing nowadays do not normally want to live in a bedsit and could see the value and attractions of the other improvements to the scheme and its overall environment. At a personal level, however, they just wanted to continue living undisturbed in their own established homes and would have preferred the work not to be carried out until after they themselves were no longer living there. There was also real concern about the impact that the project would have on the community at Pennine Court as the proposal would inevitably involve some people moving out of the scheme.

However, the landlord was prepared to take as much time as was needed to work with residents and their families to achieve their understanding and cooperation, and to help them decide whether to remain at Pennine Court or to take the option of moving elsewhere and avoid the disruption of living through the upgrade programme. Over time, resistance turned to acceptance.

In the event, seven residents chose to move elsewhere – six to nearby sheltered schemes and one, who had decided that he did not require the support provided by a sheltered scheme, to a council owned but non-sheltered flat. Other sheltered housing providers were very helpful in this process giving priority, when they had vacancies, to Pennine Court residents looking to move. On the whole, it was the more frail of the existing tenants who chose to move elsewhere on the basis that they did not want to have to live through the inevitable noise and disruption.

The eventual scope of Phase 1 was effectively determined by the numbers and location of remaining tenants prepared to cooperate by vacating their existing bedsits to allow 3-into-2 conversions to take place. Wherever possible, given the fact that four units had to be reserved for the new learning difficulties tenants, existing residents were given first refusal on the newly converted flats and this was, of course, an incentive for some. Three of the existing tenants chose to move from their bedsits into new one-bedroom flats and at least another two would make that choice now were it available.

Although there was a stage at which the priority attached to working at the tenants' pace created real anxiety about the ability to deliver within the Department of Health's time frame, the project team are convinced that this was a very important factor in managing the process both in terms of impact for existing tenants and in terms of facilitating acceptance of the new learning difficulties tenants within the community.

## Design

The partners and the selected architect, a partner in Lancaster Maloney ([s.lancaster@lancastermaloney.co.uk](mailto:s.lancaster@lancastermaloney.co.uk)), were keen to agree a detailed design specification that would offer an environment which was both learning difficulties and dementia friendly but also suited to the circumstances and requirements of older people with general needs – thus promoting integration and retaining flexibility within the scheme.

Given that one of the objectives was to move the whole scheme as far as possible along the continuum towards extra care housing, the starting point was to identify and draw from appropriate design standards and best practice advice. The sources used were:-

- The Housing Corporation's *Scheme Design Standards (Frail Elderly) 2003*
- BS 8300 *Design of Buildings...to meet needs of disabled people*
- Inclusive Environments guidance
- *Wheelchair Housing Design Guide*
- Lifetime Homes - where applicable/as far as possible
- Housing LIN Factsheet No 6 - *Design Principles For Extra Care*
- Housing LIN Factsheet No 10 - *Refurbishing Or Remodeling Sheltered Housing :A Checklist For Developing Extra Care*
- Housing Lin Factsheet No 14 - *Supporting People With Dementia In Extra Care Housing*
- Housing LIN Viewpoint No 1 - *The Challenges Of Providing Extra Care Housing To People With Dementia.*

These informed the design principles that underpinned the whole of the planned upgrade for the scheme, informing thinking about size, layout and exactly which communal facilities would be most life-enhancing for existing and prospective tenants.

It was agreed at an early stage that there was no need for the extra care flats to differ from the other units in terms of size and layout. However, considerable attention was given to ensuring the provision of appropriate facilities, design, fittings and decor for the tenants with learning difficulties – both within their own flats and in the communal areas. The latter was a particular challenge given that, to a greater or lesser extent, communal areas and facilities were intended to be used by all tenants. So, it was important to ensure that these areas and facilities were as accessible and user friendly as possible for the tenants with learning difficulties while not reducing their appropriateness and attraction for other residents.

A Design Group was set up to address these matters and agree the detailed specifications. The group carried out a fairly extensive information gathering exercise drawing on experience and best practice across the country. As it went through this process, it tested out the original assumptions and proposals, for example questioning whether an assistive bathroom was needed or whether it was really appropriate to provide a communal kitchen.

The design group visited the following schemes with a specific list of issues and questions:-

- Prescott House in Mid Sussex, which comprises 22 one-bed flats and 3 two-bed flats – 20 for older people with general needs, 5 for older people with learning difficulties
- Rosewood Court (20 apartments for older people living with dementia) & Yew Tree Court (50 one and two bedroom apartments for frail older people) in Leeds
- Portland House in St Helens - 8 ground floor units for older people with mild / moderate dementia.

In addition to these visits, the design group considered information from:-

- Salford's Total Communication Team (professionals in speech & language therapy). This focused on the use of pictures, signage and symbols for use with adults with a learning difficulty
- a presentation on Achieving Dependable Design for Meeting Complex Needs – summarising the Aberdeen experience and lessons there
- Saxon Weald's outline specification for Sheltered Schemes & Extra Care
- Housing LIN best practice guidance from various documents including, in addition to those mentioned above:-
  - LIN Factsheet No 3 - *New Provision for Older People with Learning Disabilities*
  - LIN Factsheet No 5 – *Assistive Technology in Extra Care Housing.*

Following on from this, it was decided that there was no need for an assisted bathing room, given that the individual flats were provided with wheelchair accessible wet rooms and that the experience elsewhere was that they were very little used. The space released was fitted out to provide a treatment/guest room instead.

The importance of maximising the use and potential benefits of the garden also emerged from these considerations. The local *Groundwork Trust* was recruited to assist with this. *Groundwork* is working with the residents to identify the features and facilities that will be of greatest benefit and to produce a new garden design. Once this has been agreed, they will carry out the landscaping and planting. They are also acting as a fundraiser to identify the monies to meet the cost of doing this. The Council has guaranteed the minimum sum estimated as necessary in the event that sufficient funds cannot be raised from other sources. (Further information about the Groundwork Trust can be found at [www.groundwork.org.uk](http://www.groundwork.org.uk) )

The attached appendix sets out the more detailed considerations and decisions that followed on from the research outlined above, together with comments on subsequent experience/lessons learned.

### **Assistive Technology**

From the outset, use of the most currently advanced assistive technology as appropriate and the installation of a platform capable of utilising new developments was a key part of both the ECHF bid and the plan for the overall scheme.

Following research into available assistive technology and experience elsewhere, a decision was taken to commission the *Eclipse Nursecall System* (ENS) for Pennine Court. The ENS system currently provides assistive technology to a wide range of services across the country including:-

- The Royal Hospital Chelsea - a 125-bed care home for veteran soldiers
- The Peele in Manchester, Wythenshawe - a 108 unit care home
- Hazel Court Care Village in Swansea
- Highcliffe Court, Bridlington - a retirement village development for homeowners over 55yrs old.

The ENS NurseCom platform provides a basic package of assistive technology including the facility for door sensors, movement sensors, flood detectors, smoke detectors, fall detectors and bed sensors as well as an emergency alarm system. (There is no requirement for gas detection in Pennine Court as the power supply is electric).

For the extra care tenants, the alarm system is linked initially to the 24 hour staffed extra care team office/flat and then, in the event of a non-response to the back up on call emergency response company *Eldercare* (the system routinely used by English Churches).

The platform was installed in all flats and appropriate communal areas throughout the scheme. As detailed in the Appendix, some sensors have already been provided/activated for some of the learning difficulties tenants and assistive technology add-ons can be installed as and when a tenant's needs change or as new technology is developed. In addition there is a fob door entry system to each of the extra care flats.

### **Disperse or Cluster**

As noted earlier, the building is L-shaped. When the bid was made to the Department of Health, it was envisaged that the extra care service for people with learning difficulties would be provided on the ground floor of the short arm of the 'L' – thus constituting a specific wing.

However, as the project progressed, the project team began to question this and to explore and debate the relative merits of a clustered or dispersed model for the extra care provision. Different stakeholders had different views about this and the principle was debated at some length.

In the interests of promoting integration within the scheme itself there was a very strong case for dispersing the four learning difficulty units around the rest of the scheme. It was felt that this would avoid a structural segregation and would encourage inclusion and integration. The opposing view was based on the assumption that, as the older tenants with learning difficulties might experience early onset dementia and/or other age related health problems, over time there may be a significant increase in care and support needs. In this context, it was argued that the care provider would find its task easier to manage if the four units were clustered close to each other and to the extra care service base.

Another factor was the relative priority of existing tenants' preferences. As noted earlier, the reconfiguration and redevelopment of the scheme was largely dependent on existing tenants' willingness to move, either temporarily or permanently either elsewhere within the scheme or to relocate away from Pennine Court. As already noted, negotiations about this extended over a lengthy period, continuing as the work was being carried out, and there was a need to find a balance between the needs and preferences of the existing residents and the extra care (learning difficulties) element of the project.

In the event, the outcome was arrived at by default. Four ground floor units became available in a cluster adjacent to the facilities particularly linked with the support of the prospective learning difficulties tenants – essentially the area envisaged when the original proposal was put together. There was no other viable option and so this was what happened. However, there is an understanding that this will be reviewed over time although the logistics of changing this pattern might prove challenging.

There are important lessons here for others considering this type of integrated development. The specifics of location/allocation are best considered at an early stage when they can be built in as essential requirements of the development plan. In particular, issues such as whether to disperse or cluster living units and facilities for specific user groups/services and the relative priorities to be accorded to existing tenants vis-à-vis incoming groups/residents are best addressed and clearly communicated to all concerned at a very early stage.

### **Commissioning the Extra Care Service**

A 24 hour staffed care and support service is provided for the four tenants with learning difficulties. This was commissioned jointly by Supporting People and Community Health and Social Care. Although committed to the principle of joint contracting, this was the first time that Salford had actually developed a joint care specification or carried out a joint tender process across directorates. As such, it was an important pilot exercise.

Salford's Supporting People and Community Health & Social Care (Social Services) contracts sections have recently developed a joint *Preferred Providers Framework* for provision of all their future learning difficulties care and support services. Providers went through rigorous checks regarding financial, technical & quality issues. This resulted in fifteen providers being accredited under the *Framework*.

So, when it came to identifying a provider for the extra care service at Pennine Court, the accredited providers were invited to tender. *Creative Support* were awarded the contract following a robust process geared to ensuring quality and value.

The development of the specification for the provision of care and support services at Pennine Court involved professionals from the Joint Learning Difficulty team, the Community Health and Social Care contracts team, the Supporting People team and Housing Services.

The specification clearly defines roles and responsibilities with a view to ensuring absolute clarification of expectations from both the commissioners and the providers of the service. All partners were keen to have clearly defined measurable outputs and key targets within the specification. These include:-

- integration within the scheme itself
- developing community links
- developing and encouraging relationships and friendships
- increasing take-up of education and leisure activities
- reducing social isolation
- improving the quality of life and self-esteem of service users.

The joint contracting framework will enable both teams to monitor, evaluate & manage the service delivery at Pennine Court Extra Care scheme.

Further information about the joint contracting process or joint service specification can be obtained from the Supporting People or Community Health & Social Care contracts units - [Tyler.Moore@salford.gov.uk](mailto:Tyler.Moore@salford.gov.uk) or [Judith.Proctor@salford.gov.uk](mailto:Judith.Proctor@salford.gov.uk).

It was agreed that the contract would not come into operation until a few months after the new tenants had moved in to Pennine Court. This meant that the individuals concerned would continue to be supported by the in-house team that had been supporting them in their group homes – thus providing some continuity and allowing a phasing of change for the people concerned. At the point at which the contract took effect, there was an overlap period allowing proper handover from the in-house team to *Creative Support*.

### **Tenancy Arrangements**

It was agreed that the Council would, through its Moving On Panel, have the nomination rights for the four extra care (learning difficulties) flats. The selected residents would hold assured tenancies.

It was also agreed to share the risk around voids. So, if and when a flat becomes vacant, there is an agreed notice and void period during which English Churches carries any rent and service charge loss. Beyond that time, the Council, having confirmed that it wants the flat to be held vacant until a new tenant with learning difficulties is identified/able to move in, meets these costs.

Steven is 56 years old. He has mild learning difficulties, Downs Syndrome and has begun to experience early onset dementia. Steven is also an insulin dependent diabetic but, with some support, currently manages this for himself, Steven had lived in a 24 hour supported group home for over 10 years. He is very active and really enjoys gardening, doing jobs to help people, chatting and making friends. He has lots of independent living skills and had been thinking about having his own flat for some time. Staff in his home and his care coordinator had been supporting him to think about this in a person centred way so that he could make an informed choice about his future housing and support options.

Professionals involved in Steven's care felt he was being over supported in the 24 hour group home model and that he might very well become more independent in an Extra Care setting despite his displaying signs of developing early onset dementia.

Steven moved into his new flat on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007. He was involved in choosing his kitchen, carpets, flooring and furniture and is really enjoying his new home. He has developed some new friendships with the other tenants who also live at Pennine Court and he particularly enjoyed the Christmas Party and the regular trips, which take place throughout the year.

### **Identifying Potential Tenants**

Salford set out feeling confident that the identification of tenants would be the least challenging part of the project. A rigorous exercise to identify older people with a learning difficulty who might be experiencing early onset dementia and for whom this new accommodation might be appropriate was carried out by the learning difficulty team care co-ordinator and team manager. This was straightforward initially. People were keen to take advantage of this new innovative scheme with quality accommodation – although some relatives were worried and concerned at the

prospect.

As anticipated, four prospective tenants were rapidly identified. However, well into the development of the project, two of the identified potential tenants became ill. Eventually one of them died and the second came to require residential care. A third tenant also changed his mind and no longer wanted to move. This meant that the exercise of identifying tenants had to be repeated - at quite a late stage - and a new group of four tenants identified.

The lesson from this is that it is really important to develop a 'B list' of potential tenants and to allow for all eventualities such as hospitalisation, death, people changing their minds, and family concerns and anxieties.

The four people selected to move into the extra care flats were previously living in different group homes. The decision was made that they should all make the move at the same time and this appears to have been a good approach and to have eased that initial period of *newness*.

### **User Consultation**

Once the bid was agreed, considerable effort was put into keeping the existing tenants fully informed and involved in the upgrade programme. There were regular meetings – usually in the form of coffee mornings/afternoons - between relevant English Churches managers and the tenants, and plans were posted and kept up to date. More importantly, the scheme manager updated residents on what was happening on a daily basis so that, for instance, people knew when it was going to be very noisy near their flat and could arrange to be elsewhere.

The importance of the scheme manager's role in the process must be emphasised. Her commitment both to the improvement of the scheme and to facilitating the process and minimising the disruption for tenants was very significant. One of the lessons to draw from this experience is around the importance of the scheme manager being a fully committed and informed member of the team. The management of change is difficult and it is the scheme manager who is in the front line of this when schemes are remodelled with residents in situ.

The biggest problems for residents, apart from the general disruption to their lives, was noise and dust – particularly dust. A practical lesson for scheme remodelling with residents in situ is to make sure that people are warned of such inconveniences in advance, that arrangements are in place to deal with these problems in communal areas, and to be prepared where necessary to assist residents in dealing with the effects in their own flats.

Residents had been very concerned about the possible impact on social activities and the scheme manager and contractors worked together to ensure that work was planned so as to minimise this – for instance, not working on the lounge area on the regular bingo afternoon. The sensitivity of the contractors towards residents was noteworthy with workmen taking time to talk to residents or to help them with small tasks such as changing light bulbs. This undoubtedly eased the problem and the need for this type of approach should be included in pre-contract negotiations with contractors.

Consultation with, and involvement of, the people moving into the four extra care (learning difficulties) flats was – obviously – a different process with different challenges. For them, the issues were not about whether upgrading was necessary and the process of doing it but were about what their potential new home would be like. So there were opportunities for potential residents and their families to come and visit Pennine Court and, as they were developed, to view the new flats.

Direct consultation focussed on the décor and fittings of the flats. It was thought very important that the flats should all seem different and that the new residents should have a sense of ownership and control over how they looked. In practice, this was quite difficult as the development programme and the tenant identification process did not always dovetail in the most helpful way.

However, the architect put together sample boards showing three choices each of:-

- kitchen cupboard finishes
- kitchen drawer handles
- bathroom floor coverings (all non-slip)
- carpets
- bathroom tiles.

From these, the prospective tenants made their own choices. Unfortunately, this was done before the loss of the two prospective tenants mentioned earlier. This meant that two residents ended up having to accept choices made by other people. Although this did not appear to be a particular problem for the people concerned, it was not desirable and, on another occasion, the project team would want to plan carefully to try and avoid this type of situation – and, indeed, ways of further extending the range and type of choice.

## **Integration**

From the outset, this was intended to be an initiative in integration. It reflects Salford's commitment to people with learning difficulties having access to mainstream facilities and services for older people. There was a strong commitment from all stakeholders to ensuring that any barriers to integration were identified and worked on in partnership in order to achieve a real sense of inclusion and shared community.

It is important to note that, although there was initially resistance to the project among existing tenants, this focused entirely on the disruption and loss of units. No *nimbyism* was reported with regard to the development of the extra care facility for people with learning difficulties within the scheme. This may be at least partly related to the fact that at the time there were already two people with mild learning disabilities living at Pennine Court and another resident was/is frequently visited by a relative with learning difficulties. So there was not the same fear of the unknown that can be experienced in other circumstances.

The eventual clustering of the flats and facilities for the extra care (learning difficulties) tenants presented some obvious challenges with regard to the integration of these tenants into the rest of the scheme.

Prior to moving into the scheme, the new extra care tenants visited on a number of occasions. This was partly to help them make and then confirm their decisions to move into the scheme, and to help them prepare for the move. But these visits also provided opportunities to begin the establishment of contacts between new and existing residents. The prospective new tenants came along to some of the Monday coffee mornings, went on a scheme trip and attended the Christmas party. All of this was part of the preparation for the learning difficulties clients but they were also important first steps towards integration.

Since the extra care tenants moved in, the scheme manager and the extra care staff have worked hard to promote integration, to encourage shared use of facilities and a sense of shared community – and this seems to be working.

Obviously this has taken time and was perhaps not helped by the fact that the community life of the scheme and its established pattern of social and recreational activities was inevitably interrupted to some extent by the building and redecoration work, and by the fact that a significant proportion of residents moved out of the scheme. However, the need to sometimes cancel established activities was compensated by an increase in the numbers of trips and pub lunches, and other activities are now being re-established.

It is reported that there were initially a few detrimental comments made about the newcomers but gentle persistence in encouraging social interaction and shared use of the lounges appears to be paying off. The scheme manager reports that an initial sense of distance and of *them and us* has disappeared and first names are now in common use. The newcomers are increasingly seen as part of the Pennine Court community. The development of the landscape gardening project by *Groundwork*, described earlier has been valuable here in bringing old and new tenants of the scheme together to work on the design and development of the garden.

### **Impact for the Extra Care Tenants**

It is really too early to draw conclusions about the impact that this move and the new living environment has had for the people concerned although so far feedback is positive.

However, an unanticipated outcome for two of the tenants has been an improvement in family relationships and contacts. For instance, a sibling of one tenant had found visiting the group home very uncomfortable and so had visited infrequently. Visiting an individual flat in Pennine Court is experienced very differently by this person who now visits religiously every week.

Dolly is 81 years old and she has mild learning difficulties. She also has age related arthritis and her mobility is deteriorating slowly. Dolly has lived in 24 hour supported group homes for in excess of 20 years. The home she was living in had stairs, which had been identified as a potential risk.

Dolly is a very proud lady and she takes particular pride in her flat and belongings. She likes to get involved with cooking and cleaning and she had been asking for her own place for some time. She was elated when she was offered the opportunity to move into Pennine Court Extra Care scheme and when she was shown the flat she was particularly excited by the kitchen and the prospect of looking after it - *I will really enjoy cleaning **my very own kitchen**.*

Dolly moved into her new home on the 8<sup>th</sup> January 2007. She transferred day centres to one that is local to Pennine Court and more suited to her age and she now goes to the new centre for one day a week. Dolly really looked forward to moving in and is very excited about making new friendships. She enjoys using the communal facilities, having parties and going on organised trips.

Since moving in Dolly is developing more independent living skills such as cooking and housekeeping and staff have witnessed a reduction in the level of care she requires.

## **Partnership working**

As will already be clear, partnership has been a key feature of this project.

The development programme was steered by a project team of managers and professionals from English Churches and the Council. This team worked together in a focussed and structured way to ensure that, as far as possible, the upgrade of the scheme, the development of the extra care facility, and the identification and introduction of the new tenants took place in a thought through and coherent manner. The group did not always agree but took time to explore and debate differences before, eventually, coming to a conclusion.

It was a positive and effective experience that, as well as delivering the Pennine Court project, has moved Salford's thinking about extra care for people with learning difficulties forward.

Beyond that and as already noted, once the project was on the ground the cooperative partnership working between the scheme manager and the extra care staff has been important in establishing the foundations for what those involved are confident will be a vibrant and integrated community.

A really significant factor in the success of the partnership working at all levels has been the commitment of all concerned to making this work for the people who are going to live in the extra scheme and generally at Pennine Court. The focus throughout has been primarily on these individuals rather than on organisational influence or status. Those involved think this is really important.

## **Further Information**

Partners involved in the development of Pennine Court Extra Care Scheme have jointly commissioned the development of a DVD of the project. This will follow the tenants through their journey of moving from the 24 hour supported group home model into self-contained independent living at Pennine Court Extra Care Scheme. It will also highlight key features of the service provision and the accommodation at the scheme.

Enquiries about the DVD should be directed to:-

[Victoria.Crookes@salford.gov.uk](mailto:Victoria.Crookes@salford.gov.uk).

## Pennine Court Design Decisions

	<b>Design Item Considered</b>	<b>Comment &amp; Decision</b>	<b>Learning Points</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Individual front doors of each flat</b>	The design group explored the option of having doors that swing both ways. These have been used by Affinity Healthcare at Cheadle Royal and can be particularly useful in the event of an emergency where a person may have fallen or collapsed behind the door, for example those who may suffer from regular seizures or regular falls related to their condition. This was the group's preferred option. However cost and limited space into the flats (hallways) meant that an alternative solution was agreed which incorporated the design features detailed below.	There have been no difficulties experienced by the use of a standard front door on each flat. This works perfectly well so far.
	<b>Use of a roller dead lock on front doors</b>	This was a cost effective way of ensuring that tenants with a learning difficulty who may be experiencing memory impairment due to early onset dementia could not become locked out of their flats. The group agreed this should be used on all front doors into the flats.	This works well once tenants have been enabled and supported to understand how it works.
	<b>Two phase closing mechanism</b>	This was incorporated to avoid trapping of fingers	This works well.
	<b>Weight of doors</b>	From the research carried out the group had learnt that the weight of heavy doors had posed difficulties for some older people, and some schemes stated if they were to design another scheme they would opt for lighter weight doors and automatic doors where appropriate. The difficulty was finding a lightweight door	Initial difficulties with the weight of the communal doors were experienced by some of the older tenants. Loosening the closing system slightly but still keeping the doors fire compliant overcame this.

	<p><b>Letterbox</b></p> <p><b>Door numbers or pictures</b></p> <p><b>Protective shields at hinges</b></p> <p><b>Spy hole</b></p>	<p>that still met fire and building regulations and a compromise had to be reached which was Building Regs Part M Compliant (i.e. para 3.10 – 20N).</p> <p>Letterboxes were provided on each tenants front door to promote the sense of community and independent living.</p> <p>The group had explored the use of name / picture plates (picture of the tenant or symbol can be used) in order for the tenant to easily identify their own flat. This can be helpful to people with memory impairment and /or learning difficulties. However, it was felt the use of picture plates might single out the learning difficulty flats making them different from the general needs tenants and that this could cause segregation rather than integration. The group decided to have numbers on each tenants front door to promote the sense of community and ordinary independent living.</p> <p>These were incorporated to prevent fingers being trapped. It added approximately £40 extra per door. Due to cost it was recommended that they were only used for particularly vulnerable tenants.</p> <p>These were included to add extra security and build tenants' confidence when answering their own front doors. The rectangle wide range view at normal height was agreed.</p>	<p>This works well and tenants enjoy receiving their own personal mail. (Prior to moving to Pennine Crt the tenants with learning difficulties had lived in a group home setting where post was managed by staff.</p> <p>Tenants like the sense of ownership, independence and ordinary living.</p> <p>These work well. They are ugly but effective.</p> <p>Support needed from staff initially to help tenants establish routine of using this each time there is a caller at their door. Works well and boosts confidence.</p>
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2	<b>Main door to the scheme</b>	<p>The group researched best practice and found that where schemes had manual opening main doors their tenants had experienced difficulties, particularly when carrying shopping or during the winter on dark cold evenings where they felt vulnerable outside searching for their key or fob. The group decided an automated sliding door with fob entry system was most preferable subject to planning approvals.</p> <p>There was no ramp required, as the entrance was all level access.</p>	<p>This has worked really well for ease of access and use. Some difficulties were experienced by the tenants with learning difficulties in terms of understanding how to use the fob system. Overcoming this involved patient trial and error with support from staff. It is no longer an issue for these residents but any new tenants would probably have to go through the same familiarisation and education about the system.</p>
3	<b>Assistive bathing</b>	<p>The original plan had included an assisted bathroom and the group initially shared the view that this was needed. However following research the group found that lots of schemes across the country reported minimal use of such facilities and in some cases were informed the assistive baths were not used at all. Experience from other professionals confirmed that tenants found them too institutional and in some cases <i>scary</i>. It was decided that better use could be made of the space and a treatment room capable of doubling up as guest accommodation was provided instead.</p>	<p>Each flat has a level access shower with seat.</p>
4	<b>Wall coverings (paint / textures / patterns etc)</b>	<p>The group carried out extensive research into this area and found that there is no great science to your choice of colours in environments to accommodate the needs of those with learning difficulties and /or dementia and the one key rule is to avoid patterns and textures that glare</p>	<p>The pastels have worked really well and offer a relaxed peaceful environment.</p> <p>The yellow used in the seating area looking out onto the garden is particularly popular as</p>

		or reflect. The group chose pastel colours with a matt finish as satin finish has a glare & can be reflective which can be unhelpful to those with visual impairments. No patterns as they can cause confusion to people suffering from dementia.	the space is lifted, bright and cheery.
5	<b>Communal floor covering</b>	<p>Research suggests that schemes promoting dementia friendly environments should avoid the use of patterns on floors. The group agreed to have plain carpets with natural colours throughout communal areas and in individual flats. They should also be hard wearing for the use of wheel chairs.</p> <p>They also learned that skirting boards should be covered and the same colour as the wall. This is to avoid it looking like a step to people who may be suffering from dementia type conditions.</p>	<p>This works well.</p> <p>This works well.</p>
6	<b>Bathroom fans</b>  <b>Bathroom flooring</b>	<p>Research suggests that extractor fans can be noisy and may frighten people suffering from dementia, especially those that come on automatically when the light is turned on. Humidistat quiet fans were installed.</p> <p>Plain light coloured non-slip flooring was fitted to all bathrooms.</p>	<p>This works well.</p> <p>This works well.</p>
7	<b>Assistive Technology</b>	Following extensive research the Eclipse NurseCall System was commissioned. A platform has been fitted to each flat which takes add-ons as and when a tenants needs change. Each tenant has a pendant, which allows him or her to call for help if needed; this also acts as fall detector. Door sensors and bed sensors have also been put in place for those tenants that	Initial problems have been experienced in enabling tenants with learning difficulties to understand how the technology works and how tenants are expected to use it. For example some tenants were going outdoors with their pendants on and forgetting to take

		<p>required them. The system is linked into the community alarm system (Eldercare) as a backup should there be an emergency when staff are not on site. Flood detectors are installed in all flats and the whole system is linked to a robust fire safety system with high tech smoke detection. Gas detectors were not required as only electric appliances have been used.</p>	<p>them off. This was overcome by the introduction of a picture of the pendant at each tenants front door with a hook next to it to remind the tenant to hang it by the door each time they are leaving the building. This is working well and support is ongoing to support tenants to understand.</p>
8	<b>Garden</b>	<p>The City Council in partnership with English Churches Housing Group commissioned <i>Groundwork</i>, to work with all the tenants together on the garden project. This was to promote the sense of community within the scheme and to help the integration of the new tenants with learning difficulties. They carry out consultation with the tenants and encourage them to get involved and use their skills. Ideas that have been explored include the possibility of a sensory garden, an allotment patch, a herb patch and a shaded seating area.</p>	<p>This work is ongoing and has contributed significantly to making the integration a success. It has also helped people to develop confidence in themselves, interest in the project and a sense of ownership of the garden space.</p>
9	<b>Kitchen</b>	<p>Standard fitted kitchens were provided in all flats. Colours were all chosen by each tenant during the development to give individuals the opportunity to input and to give each flat a feeling of individuality.</p> <p>Research suggests that schemes promoting dementia friendly environments should avoid the use of reflective worktops; therefore non-reflective worktops have been used in all flats.</p> <p>The group agreed to use lever taps in the kitchen and bathroom</p>	<p>This has worked well and no problems have been experienced with the kitchens.</p> <p>This works well.</p> <p>The lever taps posed initial problems for the</p>

		<p>for ease of use for those who may have dexterity problems of arthritis. All water outlets were also fitted with thermostatic mixing valves to ensure safe temperature control and to avoid the risk of scalding.</p>	<p>tenants with learning difficulties in understanding the <b>mixer</b> lever tap itself. Tenants have struggled to get the right temperature without requesting staff support. Two separate lever taps (one hot and one cold) would have worked better. Staff have introduced total communication signage to the backsplash to indicate right for cold and left for hot – this is working well.</p>
	<p><b>Windows in kitchens onto corridors</b></p>	<p>This idea is used in other schemes across the country and is known to promote a sense of community by making the flats feel more like they are on a street rather than within a scheme. They cost approximately £400 per window. They are fire rated. Following consultation not all tenants liked this idea as some felt it was an invasion of their privacy so it was decided to fit kitchen windows to a proportion of flats.</p>	<p>Those that have the windows have reported they enjoy being able to look out and being able to see who is at their front door before answering.</p>
	<p><b>Cookers</b></p>	<p>Electric cookers were agreed to ensure there was no gas supply required to the flats, as gas can pose more difficulties when working with tenants with learning difficulties and / or dementia related conditions.</p>	<p>The electric hob remains black when hot which can be difficult for tenants to realise it is hot. If we were to commission another similar service for people with learning difficulties in self-contained flats then we would use halogen, which would glow red when hot. Pictorial signage has been introduced to</p>

			help and support people to understand the hazards.
<b>10</b>	<b>Heating</b>	Cool surface temperature radiators fitted throughout the flats and in all communal spaces to avoid burning.	This works well.
<b>11</b>	<b>Lighting</b>	<p>The group agreed that low energy light bulbs should be used throughout the scheme.</p> <p>The design group explored the use of sun pipes for corridors upstairs. The group agreed this is good way of capturing natural light that also creates warmth in the summer months. The cost is £800 for each pipe. The group's view was that they would not represent good value for money for this scheme.</p> <p>Research suggests that for schemes promoting dementia friendly environments good strong lighting should be used over all task areas. This was incorporated over the kitchen worktop areas.</p>	This works well.
<b>12</b>	<b>Signage</b>	<p>Following best practice the group agreed basic signage throughout the scheme to indicate communal areas. This is in plain text with Braille provided as and when a need arises.</p> <p>The group explored having pictorial signage on communal areas. Professionals in the Total Communication Team advised we should only do this if it is identified as being required for a certain individual who uses pictures and signs in their lives everyday. The group agreed they would look at this if the need arises.</p>	<p>This works well.</p> <p>There has been no requirement for this so far. Everybody has found their way around the scheme easily, though it should be noted it is a very small scheme.</p>

13	<b>Hand Rails</b>	<p>Research suggests that hand rails should be different colours to the walls in order for them to stand out for people with dementia and to act as a tactile aid for those with visual impairments.</p> <p>The group agreed to use dome head screws to indicate the end or break in the handrail.</p>	<p>This works well.</p> <p>This works well.</p>
14	<b>Electricity Control</b>	<p>The group agreed to have isolator switches for all appliances in a lockable wall unit outside each flat for tenants with learning difficulties. In order that staff can access in an emergency.</p>	<p>This works well.</p>

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)**
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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.

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