

Housing Learning & Improvement Network

The Health and Social Care Change Agent Team (CAT) was created by the DoH to improve discharge from hospital and associated arrangements. The Housing LIN, a section of the CAT, is devoted to housing-based models of care.



Whittons Mill, Gainsborough – Sheltered Housing Contributes to Regeneration

Whitton's Mill is an exciting development where two social purposes – regeneration and social housing for older people - have coincided to the mutual benefit of each

WHITTONS MILL, GAINSBOROUGH – SHELTERED HOUSING CONTRIBUTES TO REGENERATION

Lead organisation: Anchor Trust

Local Authority: Lincolnshire County Council

Lead contact: Meryl Talbot, Anchor Trust Scheme Manager, Whittons Mill, Bridge Street, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire, DN21 2AS. Tel: 01427 617235; e-mail: whittonmill01243@btconnect.com

Key partners: Lincolnshire Social Services Dept., West Lindsey District Council, East Midlands Development Agency, Gainsborough Development Trust, English Partnerships, Shepley Memorial Fund.

The background:

Whitton's Mill is an exciting development where two social purposes – regeneration and social housing for older people - have coincided to the mutual benefit of each. Over recent decades, the riverside area in Gainsborough has become derelict and unproductive. Centrally situated on the river bank was an empty 7 storey building, Whitton's animal feed mill, which was considered a blot on the landscape and a disincentive to redevelopment of adjoining sites. In the late 1990s, this became the subject of discussions between the East Midlands Development Agency and Gainsborough Regeneration as a key element for environmental improvements along the River Trent. The aim was to regenerate both the riverside and Gainsborough town centre itself by connecting the two to produce both leisure and commercial amenities.

Gainsborough Development Trust bought the mill in the first instance to safeguard the future of the building and Anchor Trust was invited to present development proposals for



converting it into housing for older people. The mill thus became a flagship for starting further development and rehabilitation of buildings on the river frontage. It has proved to be a lever for private sector investment and a catalyst for the transformation of the area – its value cannot be overestimated in this respect and it is heartening to see a development for older people playing such a constructive role in a locality.

Anchor's Whitton's Mill sheltered housing

Whitton's Mill is now a 7-storey block of 45 mostly one-double bed room flats for people over the age of 55 years, with non-resident full-time and part-time scheme managers. It opened for tenants in 2003 and is now full, with a waiting list. The scheme was originally planned and designed by Anchor Trust as an Extra Care Housing development for older people in need of care and support services around the clock. As it turned out, however, social services funding for this degree of care could not be made available and the concept was changed after the design stage to ordinary sheltered housing, although the design and facilities can still accommodate extra care in the future if desired.

The design of the converted building and its proximity to the river in an area that will have totally revived in the next few years make it an attractive proposition for its older residents. The flats, mostly around 54 m², have 'wet bathrooms' (shower rooms) for ease of access, particularly for wheelchairs; some of the kitchens are designed for wheelchair users and tracking is provided for in some of the flats for hoists. Wide lobbies on each floor provide space for electric buggies. All flats lie above the ground floor; secure access to the building, the lifts and the stairs for residents is via touch-control key fobs and for visitors via an intercom and CCTV system linked to each flat.

On the ground floor, there is a laundry, an assisted bathroom facility, a hair-dressing salon and a guest bedroom with en-suite bathroom. In addition, there is a small gym with exercise equipment, a computer or media room, a small meeting room and a large, attractive lounge and dining area opening onto the riverside walk and served by a substantial kitchen. In the lounge, large black and white photographs that capture the history of the town and the riverside were donated to the scheme by the Shepley Memorial Trust. This Trust also donated a conservatory on the top floor known as the 'Winter Garden' where residents can sit and look out over the river and countryside and make tea or coffee and where they can sit out on a balcony when the weather permits. Flats on the riverside of the building on the top floor also have small balconies.

Key strategic issues and challenges:

To make the most of its pivotal role in the regeneration of the riverside, Whitton's Mill really needs to open itself out to become a more dynamic part of the locality and offer its rich resources to local people at least during office hours.

It is early days as yet, but adopting an outward stance has to be reconciled with the need of tenants for a feeling of security – even though public access can be confined to the ground floor. This is a challenge for Anchor, which has to proceed slowly.

The media room is being hired out on a trial basis to a local LearnDirect company for part of the week and will therefore be used by people from the locality and will of course be open to tenants. The local council has supplied computers and other equipment and one computer will be reserved for tenant use even on the days when classes are in progress. The dining room and kitchen are currently under-used, having been planned for the needs of a frailer group of residents. Cooked lunches are held twice a week at the moment for tenants but there is insufficient demand to make the kitchen a viable proposition without opening it up to non-tenants. It would provide an attractive and valuable resource in this respect, particularly for older people from the neighbourhood, but would probably still need a subsidy to make it viable. The meeting room is a resource which also could be made available to outside groups. All hire charges will be put towards reducing the cost of service charges for tenants.

This is a relatively new scheme with a great deal of potential. Older people's fear of crime is a real issue and Anchor's philosophy is to listen to its tenants. A fuller, more dynamic use of the building's resources is important but will probably have to proceed step by step, testing the security of the building and developing confidence among its residents. Anchor Trust's scheme manager is hopeful that her ideas for generating social interaction and activity will gradually take hold.



Resources:

To convert the mill, funding was made available from English Partnerships, the Single Regeneration Budget and Heritage Environmental Regeneration Strategy to supplement funding via Social Housing Grant from the Housing Corporation. Social Housing grant was also provided by West Lindsey District Council. The development would not have been possible without this additional finance.

Learning points:

Whitton's Mill is not only a flagship for riverside regeneration but also for social housing and for sheltered housing. It is a high quality, attractive conversion on a prime site which offers a superb environment for its tenants. The lesson here is that an imaginative, creative approach to housing can bring wider benefits for a whole town.

Tenants have probably benefited greatly from the fact that the mill was planned and designed as an extra care housing facility and it is hoped that the potential of the ground floor for outreach and more intensive use will be fully realised. However, tenants in the extra care category would have been no less security conscious. Perhaps the lesson here for other similar schemes is that the wider utilisation of the building's amenities might have been established as a 'given' from the first, so that tenants came in with this understanding. However, given the change of use experienced in relation to this particular scheme, this kind of forward planning would have been difficult.



Case Study prepared by **Maria Brenton** for the Housing Learning & Improvement Network.

Other Housing LIN publications available in this format:

Case Study no.1: Extra Care Strategic Developments in North Yorkshire (01.09.03)

Case Study no.2: Extra Care Strategic Developments in East Sussex (01.09.03)

Case Study no.3: 'Least-use' Assistive Technology in Dementia Extra Care (02.02.04)

Case Study no.4: Tenancy Issues - Surviving Partners in Extra Care Housing (01.06.04)

Case Study no.5: Village People: A Mixed Tenure Retirement Community (15.10.04)

Case Study no.6: How to get an Extra Care Programme in Practice (15.10.04)

Case Study no.7: Sonali Gardens - An Extra Care Scheme for Bangladeshi and Asian Elders
(11.01.05)

Case Study no.8: The Kent Health & Affordable Warmth Strategy (26.04.05)

Case Study no.9: Supporting People with Dementia in Sheltered Housing (26.04.05)

Case Study no.10: Direct Payments for Personal Assistance in Hampshire (26.04.05)

Case Study no.11: Housing for Older People from the Chinese Community in Middlesbrough
(26.04.05)

Case Study no.12: Shared ownership for People with Disabilities (26.04.05)

Case Study no.13: Home Care Service for People with Dementia in Poole (26.04.05)

Case Study no.14: Intermediate Care Services within Extra Care Sheltered Housing in Maidenhead
(26.04.05)

The Housing LIN welcomes contributions on a range of issues pertinent to Extra Care housing. If there is a subject that you feel should be addressed, please contact us.

Published by:
Housing Learning & Improvement Network
Health and Social Care Change Agent Team
Department of Health, Room LG33
Wellington House
135-155 Waterloo Road
London SE1 8UG

www.changeagentteam.org.uk/housing

Administration:
Housing LIN, c/o EAC
3rd Floor
London SE1 7TP
020 7820 1682
housinglin@eac.org.uk