

**NATIONAL  
HOUSING  
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**TPAS**



Developing Excellent People



## Joint Executive Summary

Summary of the two documents: “Effective Resident Involvement and Consultation in Sheltered Housing”, produced by the Centre for Housing and Support and TPAS and “More than just a few kind words!” produced by the National Housing Federation.

**Two projects commissioned by the CLG Ministerial Working Group for Sheltered Housing**



# Foreword

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Sheltered housing has been a home of choice for many older people in our society for the last 30-40 years. Giving that little bit of extra help when needed and providing opportunities for ongoing social activity with peers, it has proved a valuable setting in which older people have been able to live safely and maintain their independence.

In our strategy for an ageing society, Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods, we recognised that such specialised housing will continue to play a valuable role in supporting us as we grow older, and will be a positive choice for many older people in the future.

Sheltered housing has always included a range of different models of accommodation and support. The changing and increasing expectations of older people, and the age and nature of some sheltered housing, mean that those models need to be able to adapt to different requirements. At the same time, different ways of funding the support that is included with sheltered housing – traditionally provided by a warden or sheltered scheme manager – has also led to changes in how sheltered housing is delivered.

Sometimes these changes have been done very well, but the report by Help the Aged – Nobody's Listening – captured the concerns of a growing number of older people where changes hadn't been done well, leaving them feeling vulnerable, distressed and unsure where to go with their complaints.

We are very clear that the best services are developed together with the active involvement of those who use them. The constraints of funding, the demands for different models of services are all things that sheltered housing residents are aware of, and can help providers and commissioners of services to address when they are fully involved.

So we brought together the Ministerial working group on sheltered housing, drawing on the expertise of representatives of older people, sheltered housing residents, providers and service commissioners. Its task was to identify ways to make a positive difference to the lives of people living in sheltered housing, now and in the future. It was also required to address some of the explicit concerns made by older people about how the changes in sheltered housing were being introduced.

This Executive Summary brings together the key findings from the reshaping support in sheltered housing guide "More than just a few kind words!" and "Effective Resident Involvement and Consultation in Sheltered Housing". In carrying out each of these projects it was clear that successful achievement of one; change, relied on successful achievement of the other; consultation. Residents need to be involved and consulted – their opinions matter. This summary provides a clear and succinct overview of the key points and recommendations made within each individual report giving providers, commissioners and residents a starting point in their work to develop and deliver good quality, appropriate sheltered housing services.

Lord Bill McKenzie of Luton  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Communities and Local Government

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Whilst all reasonable care and attention has been taken in compiling this guide, the organisations concerned cannot be held responsible for any error, omission or the consequence taken from advice included.

Organisations should seek appropriate legal, financial and other appropriate advice before taking any specific action in relation to the subject of this guide.

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## **More reading**

Two further projects commissioned by the CLG Ministerial Working Group for Sheltered Housing:

- Making your voice heard – a guide to complaints (CIH)
- EAC Housing for Older People Awards and Report

# Introduction

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The establishment of the Ministerial working group on sheltered housing in early 2009 has provided an opportunity to take forward the key debates on developing housing support and reshaping sheltered housing. It has explored how best to enhance this important service and how to embrace good practice in engaging and empowering residents.

The Ministerial group brought together representatives of sheltered housing residents, providers and service commissioners. Its task was to identify ways to make a positive difference to the lives of people living in sheltered housing, now and in the future. Two publications have been written as a result of the Ministerial group's work:

1. "More than just a few kind words!" Reshaping support in sheltered housing: a good practice guide for housing providers and local authorities
2. "Effective resident involvement and consultation in sheltered housing": a good practice guide for providers and commissioners

**A full copy of each guide is available to download from the following websites.**

**More than just a few kind words! [www.housing.org.uk/careandsupport](http://www.housing.org.uk/careandsupport)**

**Effective Resident Involvement and Consultation in Sheltered Housing [www.chs.ac.uk](http://www.chs.ac.uk)**

# “More than just a few kind words!”

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Society is ageing, and a better range of choices is needed to enable people to live fulfilling lives into older age. In addition to developing new types of building and new service models, the publication contends best use must be made of existing resources. This publication aims to assist with this process by providing good practice examples of how support services within existing sheltered housing stock are being modernised and developed.

## **Drivers for Change**

This publication focuses on the emerging policy agendas that are impacting upon sheltered housing. These drivers for change include:

- The growing importance of the personalisation of services
- Changing needs
- Changing expectations
- The impact of Supporting People (SP) services
- Value for money and changing commissioning patterns
- Pressures upon scheme managers.

The publication recognises from the onset that the aspirations of residents, future residents, staff, providers and commissioners do not always match. There are some very real and difficult debates required if the potential of sheltered housing is to be achieved. The importance of seeing sheltered housing as a community resource, perhaps a hub for community services, requires an approach to service development that seeks to align the strategic needs assessment and planning process with the importance of carrying staff and residents in any service options or reshaping debates.

## **Managing Change**

The challenge of change reflects the importance of it being managed through a negotiated process. The good practice highlights effective and inclusive ways of involving staff and residents. The publication looks at the range of existing and potential future structures. It then, through a series of case studies sets out ways to develop services. These are:

1. Increasing the use of telecare and assistive technology
2. Changing to a service offering housing management only
3. Developing a menu of options
4. Developing a fully personalised service
5. Extending the target group for the service to include older homeless people and people with complex needs
6. Undertaking an asset management review and consultation on services to both improve the quality of the stock and service delivery arrangements.

These options are not mutually exclusive but offer a range of choices for responding to the changing needs of an ageing population.

A strategy for remodelling support services is required based upon close partnership working between providers and local authorities. The publication highlights that Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) need to become more aware of the important role sheltered housing can play.

## **Re-commissioning Sheltered Housing**

The publication illustrates that sheltered housing is being affected by many drivers for change. In some of the good practice examples the impetus for change has come from providers, in others the catalyst was a strategic review of the whole authority commissioned by the SP team. The most positive examples involve a partnership between commissioner, provider, residents and partner agencies. The publication contains a wide range of recommendations. They reinforce the key actions required for a re-shaping of sheltered housing based on achieving buy in from all partners.

# Effective Resident Involvement

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This publication explores the issue of effective resident involvement and consultation: what it means, what is expected, and potential barriers. It concludes that effective involvement means a long-term commitment – from everyone in an organisation – to making the active involvement of, and consultation with, residents a core part of the organisation's activities, backed up by good written policies and procedures.

## **From Informing to Empowering**

There are many terms used in resident involvement work and not all have the same meaning or indeed the same outcome. Misunderstanding of the different types of involvement activities can lead to unrealistic expectations and unhappy residents. Asking the right questions:

What is the aim? What are the constraints? Where do we want to be? Do we know where residents want to be? can help to identify the most appropriate approach and activity for effectively involving residents.

Offering different ways for residents to be involved is important to enable resident opinion to be heard. Formal means such as structured forums to informal social lunches and bingo sessions can help to support as many residents as possible to take part in ways that best suit them.

## **Encouraging and Valuing Older People's Involvement**

Encouraging residents to become involved helps ensure people feel valued and that their opinion matters. This publication highlights that formal structures particularly, support a democratic and accountable approach; however there should be clearly defined roles for resident representatives. This is important if perceptions that the person is there to represent the provider rather than residents are to be minimised.

Responding to, and engaging with, hard-to-reach residents can provide valuable feedback, and their views should be sought. Providers should identify their hard-to-reach resident groups to ensure services develop in line with these residents' needs and expectations. This requires a range of ways to become engaged. They must value different cultures or challenges faced by individuals.

## **Developing Sheltered Housing Services - Case Studies**

Although this publication focuses on the wider importance of genuine, effective resident involvement and consultation, there has been much focus on the involvement and consultation issues that arise when developing sheltered housing services. The publication includes a selection of case studies that address these issues, demonstrating the need to work at developing, in a planned and proactive way, services that residents want and will also find beneficial. Each case study further demonstrates that consulting on how services might change delivered benefits in other areas, such as the Decent Homes Standard (ensuring schemes are better places to live, making them easier to let, manage and maintain).

## **Key Messages**

Six key messages emerged from the publication:

1. The importance and value of being involved
2. Establish a range of options
3. Continuum of involvement
4. Scope and scale of decision making
5. Influencing external bodies
6. Resourcing

## **Developing Your Own Good Practice**

Providers and commissioners may have their own local or organisational barriers to overcome before effective involvement and consultation can become a reality. However, there are six key elements to help develop good practice and overcome such barriers:

1. Review your current practices
2. Clarify your objectives
3. Be prepared
4. Know your people (employees, volunteers, residents)
5. Learn from others
6. Sustainability.

# Conclusion

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The challenge set by Baroness Andrews, Minister of State at the CLG and continued by Lord McKenzie was “to identify ways to make a positive difference to the lives of people living in sheltered housing, now and in the future.”

The two publications highlight how complex issues that have a real impact on people’s homes and lives can be addressed. They highlight that reshaping support in sheltered housing has to be part of a process reflecting strategic choices and the judgements of residents working with providers and the commissioners. They show that the tensions that underlie the complex debates and the demographic, policy and resource challenges can be overcome when resident based partnership working becomes the building block for all service provision.



## The ministerial working group on sheltered housing is chaired by Lord Bill McKenzie of Luton.

The working group was convened by the Department in early 2009 to identify ways to make a positive difference to the lives of people living in sheltered housing, now and in the future. The working group brings together representatives of sheltered housing residents, providers and service commissioners. The following organisations are represented on the working group:

- Age Concern and Help the Aged
- AIMS - Age Concern's housing advice, mediation and information service
- Association of Directors of Adult Social Services
- Audit Commission
- Centre for Housing and Support
- Chartered Institute of Housing
- Department of Health
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Elderly Accommodation Counsel
- EROSH - the Essential role of sheltered housing
- FirstStop advice service
- Homes and Communities Agency
- Local Government Association
- McCarthy and Stone
- National Housing Federation
- Sheltered Housing UK
- Tenant Services Authority
- Tenants Participation Advisory Service