

On-going Review of Care Services

Cabinet Member Cllr Ray Stanley
Responsible Officer Head of Housing and Property Services

Reason for Report: Further to previous information provided to the PDG on Care Services, to now present options for Members' consideration for the future of the Supported Housing service, ie:

1. Withdraw from the marketplace
2. Tender for a new contract
3. Introduce service charges to tenants when Devon County Council funding ends
4. Introduce a repairs service for elderly people in the private sector

RECOMMENDATION(S): That the PDG recommend to the Cabinet, for onward adoption by Council that:

1. **The Council does not provide a Housing Support service to sheltered housing tenants after April 2015**
2. **The Council continues to provide the Lifeline Alarm service for tenants and private customers**
3. **Service charges are introduced for Council tenants who receive the Lifeline Alarm service**
4. **Repairs services are made available to private customers**

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Council must run the Housing service efficiently and effectively.

Financial Implications: The current contract will end in April 2015. A new contract will be subject to a tendering exercise and will only provide services to a small group of tenants with high support needs.

Legal Implications: The service is not a statutory responsibility.

Risk Assessment: The Housing service will need to consider how it will provide a minimal level of housing support for tenancy sustainment if the DCC contract ends or is significantly reduced.

1.0 Introduction

Supported Housing Contract

- 1.1 In December 2013 Devon County Council (DCC) began consulting with all service providers and made the following proposals:

- a) DCC will no longer support non-statutory services. Support services will only be provided to people that have received a DCC Fairer Access to Care (FAC's) assessment and have been identified as having a *Critical* or *Substantial* level of support need.
 - b) The service will move into mainstream Social Care from April 2015 and enter the Social Care Framework Agreement. This will require all providers to tender for new contracts with no guarantee of any new business. Where a provider transfers their current business into the Framework Agreement, the existing contract prices will be aligned to the new contract price. The new contract will be a 13-week rolling contract.
 - c) The allocation of any care and support to tenants living in sheltered housing will be undertaken by DCC's brokerage service following a FAC's assessment.
- 1.2 The consultation with providers ends on 13 January 2014 and a report will be submitted to DCC's Full Council in February 2014. The Cabinet Member for Housing, Head of Housing and Property Services and Supported Housing Manager, have met with DCC officers to discuss their proposals and the options that are available. It was agreed that both parties will work together to ensure the best outcome for our tenants from April 2015, which will require many tenants to be assisted through a FAC's assessment.

2.0 **Future Options**

- a) Withdraw from the marketplace
- 2.1 Three months' notice would be required to end the current contract. This would not allow sufficient time to successfully transfer services to another provider and would impact on some vulnerable tenants' welfare. DCC may also struggle to find another provider to take on the work prior to the start of the new Framework Agreement. If the Council decides to withdraw from the marketplace it would be prudent to use 2014 to ensure an effective handover of the service to a new provider in April 2015.
- b) Tender for the new contract
- 2.2 The Council could continue to provide a service to tenants that meets the FAC's eligibility assessment criteria, but staffing levels would need to be significantly reduced. It is estimated that approximately 14% of sheltered housing tenants have a *Critical* or *Substantial* level of support need. It should be noted that the Framework Agreement does not guarantee any new business and the DCC brokerage team use a "call-off" system based on price to allocate work to providers.
- c) Tenants pay for their support service

2.3 The Council could introduce service charges and continue to provide the current services to tenants. DCC currently funds over 95% of sheltered housing tenants' support services and a large number of self-funding tenants recently 'opted out' of receiving services. It is anticipated that many tenants funded by DCC would not be prepared to pay for the service and Housing Benefit will not pay for these services.

3.0 **New Services**

3.1 In November 2013 market research was undertaken to determine if the existing range of support services could be delivered to private customers living in their own homes. Questionnaires were sent to 741 Lifeline Alarm customers to ask if they would be interested in support services from Care Services staff or maintenance services provided by the Repairs Team. The results indicate a very low demand for support services, but confirmed a demand for the Repairs Team's services in this market. Over 270 customers replied to the survey and a summary of results is contained in Appendix 1.

4.0 **Impact on Tenants**

4.1 Targeted Support was introduced in October 2013 and the majority of tenants now receive one visit and a telephone call per week. Approximately 180 tenants receive weekly visits and have a Lifeline alarm, and approximately 280 have just a Lifeline alarm.

4.2 Approximately 14% of existing sheltered housing tenants meet the FAC's eligibility criteria, but there may be more tenants that haven't asked for an assessment as existing arrangements meet their needs. The loss of the current Targeted Support Service could lead to social exclusion for some tenants. This could result in loneliness, depression, alcoholism and increased mental health problems for our most isolated tenants. Part of the Supported Housing Officer's (SHO) role is to monitor tenants' well-being during visits and they can quickly spot the deterioration in a tenant's condition and arrange for additional help or refer the tenant to their GP. The loss of this preventative and monitoring role could lead to some tenants being unable to sustain their tenancies and an accelerated deterioration in their health and wellbeing.

5.0 **Sustaining Tenancies**

5.1 There are alternative ways of providing support to sheltered housing tenants if the current support service ends in 2015:

Targeted Support

5.2 DCC will continue to fund support services for all tenants that meet the FAC's assessment criteria, but these services will be provided by a new provider.

Silver Line

- 5.3 Silver Line is a new national telephone service that was introduced in November 2013. It is the only free confidential helpline that provides information, friendship and advice to older people 24 hours a day, every day of the year. Specially trained helpline staff can offer information, friendship and advice; link callers to local groups and services; offer regular befriending calls; protect and support those who are suffering abuse and neglect. Calls are free and the service relies on charitable donations from organisations and individuals who care about the welfare and safety of older people.

Tenancy Support

- 5.4 The Council could introduce a new Tenancy Support post to specialise in providing support to elderly tenants throughout the district. The role would differ from the existing Supported Housing Officer role as the officer would be part of the Neighbourhood Team and would not make regular contact with tenants. They would react to queries from sheltered housing tenants and provide appropriate advice, which may include making referrals to DCC for services from other agencies or FAC's assessments.

Lifeline Alarm for Tenants

- 5.5 Tenants can use their Lifeline alarms to summon emergency medical assistance or to report non-urgent repairs to the council via Taunton Deane. If the Council does not tender for a new contract funding for alarm services will end in 2015 and service charges will need to be introduced. Approximately 280 tenants have an alarm funded through DCC and the current service charge is £2.50 per week. It is anticipated that alarm services will not be funded by the new contract arrangements.

Lifeline Alarm Service in the Private Sector

- 5.6 The Council could continue to provide this service to the community, as private customers pay for the rental of the equipment and 24/7 monitoring. We would also look to further develop the telecare service offered to its full potential, providing such additional facilities as pressure mats, etc.

6.0 Financial Implications

Current Service

- 6.1 In 2012/13 the Supported Housing Service received £264,000 from Devon County Council, which was guaranteed for the full financial year. The 2013/14 budget has yet to be finalised, but DCC has indicated that it will remain unchanged until September 2014. The Council will have the option to give 3 months' notice to end the contract in September 2014 if a satisfactory arrangement cannot be agreed with DCC.

- 6.2 The Council also received £16,000 from self-funding tenants who do not qualify for DCC funding.

Silver Line

- 6.3 The Silver Line is a free service.

Tenancy Sustainment

- 6.4 The introduction of a new officer would be approximately £30,000 per annum, including on-costs.

Tender For the New Contract

- 6.5 It is estimated that 14% of sheltered housing tenants have a *Critical* or *Substantial* level of support need. DCC income could fall from £264,000 to approximately £37,000 per annum.

Lifeline Alarm for Tenants

- 6.6 The Taunton Deane alarm service currently costs £38,500 for the Council's Sheltered Housing tenants and private Lifeline alarm customers. A service charge would need to be introduced to all sheltered housing tenants who are currently funded by DCC.

Redundancies

- 6.7 The number of staff employed by the service was reduced by a restructuring in May 2013 and the council would endeavour to redeploy the remaining 5 staff. It is not known at this stage if the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE) will apply. If TUPE does not apply the total redundancy costs would be approximately £27,000.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 It is concluded that:

1. The Council withdraws from the marketplace when the current contract ends in April 2015. The contract may be terminated sooner if adequate funding cannot be secured for 2014/15.
2. Care Services will work with DCC to ensure services are smoothly transferred to a new provider. This would include supporting all tenants through the FAC's assessment process to determine if they are eligible for a support service from a new provider in April 2015.
3. Tenants will be given the option of retaining their Lifeline Alarm service, but will be required to pay a service charge. Staff will assist tenants to apply for a FAC's assessment to pay their service charge.

4. The Lifeline Alarm service for private customers will be retained by the Council and to further develop the telecare service offered utilising the technology available to its full potential i.e. providing such additional facilities as pressure mats, etc.
5. The Council will look to introduce a Repairs Service for elderly people in the private sector.

Contact for more information: Nick Sanderson, Head of Housing & Property Services, 01884 234960, nsanderson@middevon.gov.uk

Circulation of the report: Cabinet Member for Housing, Management Team, Supported Housing Manager

Appendix 1

1. Mid Devon District Council is considering introducing a new range of services for elderly customers who live in their own homes. Please indicate below which services you are interested in.

	Response Percentage	Response Count
Handyman Services	73.2%	169
Building Repairs	40.7%	94
Gas & Electrical Cooker Connections	20.8%	48
Plumbing & Electrical Repairs	55.8%	129
Adaptions i.e grab rails, ramps	45.0%	104
Arrange help with Housework	27.7%	64
Help with online shopping	8.2%	19
Arrange Gardening services	38.5%	89
Painting & Decorating	45.5%	105
making Appointments	7.4%	17
Assistance with claiming benefits	22.9%	53
	Other (please specify) Show Responses	52
	answered question	231
	skipped question	40