

On-going Review of Care Services

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

Reason for Report: To present options for the future of the Supported Housing service for Members to consider being:

1. Offer services to the private sector
2. Withdraw from the market

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That a further report be presented to the PDG for further consideration when the 2014/15 funding is known.

Relationship to Corporate Plan: The Council must run the housing Service efficiently and effectively.

Financial Implications: Devon County Council funding was cut by 10% from April 2013; over 120 tenants have opted out of receiving the service which has historically been subsidised by the HRA.

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. There is risk of raising public expectations by introducing new services in 2014 off the back of the existing supported housing structure only to withdraw the service if the DCC Supported Housing service ends in 2015.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The future of the Supported Housing service was considered by members at two PDG meetings earlier this year, but a recommendation to Full Council was not made. The future of Devon County Council (DCC) funding is still unclear, but service providers are meeting with DCC on 26 November to discuss future service provision.

1.2 Independent research has established that the elderly population in Mid Devon will increase by 190% between 2008 and 2033. The majority of people requiring support live in their own homes and cannot access services without moving home. Without support many will have to move in to residential care.

- 1.3 The number of sheltered housing tenants receiving visits from Mid Devon Supported Housing Officers has fallen to approximately 180 since tenants were given the option of opting out of receiving services. An additional 280 tenants have a Lifeline alarm-only service. Over 700 private customers have Lifeline alarms in their homes and this service continues to grow each year.
- 1.4 For many years the Sheltered Housing service was subsidised by the council, but in 2013 the council resolved to stop subsidising the service. Staffing levels have been reduced, with four officers redeployed within the council and two being made redundant.
- 1.5 In October 2013 the service became known as a “Targeted Support Service” which now offers 5 levels of support to tenants. Tenants’ needs were reassessed as part of the consultation exercise and new levels of support were agreed. The majority of tenants now receive one visit and telephone call per week. The new service presents greater flexibility and service delivery can be increased when an individual’s circumstances change.
- 1.6 New sheltered housing tenants do not automatically receive a support service and are assessed to determine their level of support needs and eligibility for government funding.

2.0 **New Services**

- 2.1 As demand and funding for Supported Housing services falls there is an opportunity to diversify and offer housing support and repairs services to private Lifeline alarm customers. Private customers could be given the opportunity to purchase adaptation services from the Repairs service i.e. grab rails, ramps, bathrooms, key safes. Additional services could be introduced which could include a handyman service, electrical and plumbing emergency repairs, a decorating service, home visits by Supported Housing Officers and gardening and cleaning services provided by external partners. Market research is being undertaken to determine the estimated level of demand for these services.
- 2.2 Additional Telecare alarm sensors have been made available to private Lifeline Alarm customers, but initial demand for these devices has been low. This is mainly due to direct competition from Call24 who provides Telecare peripherals to high risk individuals free of charge under a DCC contract.

3.0 **Devon County Council (DCC) Contract**

- 3.1 DCC has indicated that the Supported Housing service contract will enter the Community Care Framework Agreement via a tendering exercise in 2014. The new contracts will start in April 2015 and it is anticipated that DCC will only commission services to fulfil their statutory responsibilities. The new contract may only provide services to tenants that have been assessed and determined to have a *critical* or *substantive* need. Approximately 15% of MDDC sheltered housing tenants meet this level of need and the service

would be unsustainable if funding was to be significantly reduced. DCC has previously agreed to provide details of the 2014/15 budget by September 2013, but this information has not been received.

- 3.2 The council needs to consider how it will provide a minimal level of housing support to elderly tenants if the DCC contract ends or is reduced. Tenants could use their Lifeline alarms to contact the Taunton Deane Helpline who could forward non-urgent messages to the Neighbourhood Teams during the next working day. This system has been used successfully for several years to pass on out-of-hours messages to the Supported Housing Officers.
- 3.3 The council needs to consider how it will communicate with tenants if support services end in 2015. This is likely to receive considerable press coverage as these changes will affect all providers and thousands of elderly people across Devon.
- 3.4 There is risk of raising public expectations by introducing new services in 2014 and then withdrawing them if the Supported Housing service ends in 2015.

4.0 **Conclusion**

- 4.1 It is recommended that Members consider if Care Services should diversify to introduce a new range of services in the private sector or pursue an exit strategy when the Targeted Support service moves into the Framework Agreement in April 2015.

Contact for more Information: Nick Sanderson - 01884 234960
(nsanderson@middevon.gov.uk)

Circulation of the Report: Cllr Ray Stanley, Management Team

List of Background Papers: