

LGA/CPA Call for Evidence

The role of Local Government in respect of an Ageing Society

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Ashford Borough Council has for a number of years, working in close cooperation with partners in health and social care, recognised the need to identify and deliver projects and services that support an ageing population. Providing greater choice and enhancing quality of life in later years.

This paper highlights achievements and planned projects of the Housing Service but across a number of departments work is ongoing to address and support the needs of older people, one example is the training of over 270 staff as Dementia Friends. The Council supports partner organisations to deliver a range of fitness and lifestyle activities specifically aimed at older people, for example; over 50's swimming, yoga and low impact classes. In the community, chair based exercises are run from two local care homes, and the local clinical commissioning group has had a key focus on falls prevention amongst older people.

Some of the key issues for the housing service are:

- Older people under-occupying family sized accommodation and potentially requiring expensive adaptations.
- Lack of understanding of other choices of accommodation available and what those choices offer e.g. sheltered, extra care.
- Poor repair in private sector, leading to hazards in the home, increased falls and health issues associated with cold homes.
- Increase in percentage of frail older people in the community (with and without dementia) and how best to support them, and their carers in suitable accommodation, maintaining dignity and independence.
- Difficulties engaging with health services to recognise the role housing can play in a preventative health agenda and accessing funding to put measures in place to reduce incidences of crisis.

Ways in which the housing service is adjusting to an ageing population are:

- Staff have undertaken dementia friends training, including all sheltered scheme managers
- Provision of a recuperative care facility
- Remodelling of existing sheltered schemes

- Participation in 2 PFI's to develop 2 extra care schemes
- Enabling Housing Association partners to develop extra care schemes, through using s106 affordable housing obligations and in rural areas, through the exception site policy.
- Developed an extra care design guide to ensure HAPPI principles are followed in all new older persons accommodation: <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/developing-affordable-housing-eligibility-criteria>
- Actively inputting to county wide older persons strategy and protocol, KCC Accommodation Strategy: <http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/adult-social-care-policies/accommodation-strategy-for-adult-social-care>
And the Kent Housing Group Older Persons Protocol: <http://www.kenthousinggroup.org.uk/uploads/OPFrameworkFINAL.pdf>
- Addressing health inequalities by developing a strategy for the borough (Mind the Gap) and contributed to the countywide, Think Housing First strategy. <http://www.kentjppbhousing.org/uploads/ThinkHousingFirstNov13.pdf>
- Hosting and membership of the
 - Ashford Health and Wellbeing Board
 - Ashford Dementia Action Alliance
 - Ashford's own Health, Housing & Social Care Working Group (dealing with operational good practice and delivering on joint initiatives)

Below is further detail on a number of the initiatives listed above.

Recuperative Care Facility

Some ten years ago we jointly commissioned with social services a 7 bedroom recuperative care facility adjoining one of our sheltered housing schemes (Farrow Court). This facility helped play a key role in terms of local health provision by enabling more rapid discharge from hospital for patients and put them in a supported environment whilst they could recover and re-acquire the skills needed to return to independent living.

The facility has been continuously successful over the years to the point where we are now looking to provide a bigger, better facility on the same site as part of the Farrow Court remodelling programme.

Sheltered Scheme Remodelling

We are currently on site building a sheltered housing scheme at Farrow Court in Ashford that will see the existing facility increase from 45 rather poor quality units (poor space standards, poor natural light, poor disabled facilities) to one of 104 care-ready units including 12 apartments specifically for adults with learning disabilities; 8 recuperative care apartments; a new elder care day centre operating 7 days a week with a particular focus on support for clients with dementia at weekends; communal lounge facilities, adapted bathing, a hairdressers and a shop. All of this has been designed around the best current practice (HAPPI/HAPPI2) in terms of light, space standards, dementia friendly design etc. and we have worked with partners in health and social care at every stage of the design and commission of this project.

In obtaining funding for this work we successfully pursued bids from both the Affordable Homes Programme and the Care and Support Specialised Housing Fund (first round) – grants in total of over £4m. This supplements the £11m contribution from our own HRA resources, made possible by the self-financing changes introduced in April 2012. Without the grant funding however, we could not deliver the extent of scheme we will – a scheme which will be of huge benefit to all stakeholders.

As work on this scheme progresses we are already moving forward with plans to redevelop and remodel a further 6 schemes over the coming 12 years or so to bring them up to a similar standard in terms of quality, care-ready accommodation. We will seek appropriate funding wherever possible, including from health and social care stakeholders when we can, in order to supplement the very significant sums we are devoting from our own HRA resources. It was the very positive attitude of members and officers at this council to reform of the HRA that saw the opportunities it offered to undertake such major sheltered remodelling projects.

Utilising grant funding for the HCA Affordable Homes Programme we extended the sheltered scheme by 9 flats at Luckley House. We are also developing plans to improve another scheme at Cotton Hill House in Hamstreet. We have already installed two lifts to improve mobility for tenants as well as significantly improved communal lounge. We will supplement this shortly with improved adapted bathing and guest room facilities, conversion of bedsits to one bed flats and some extension work that could lead to a further first floor extension and more accommodation as and when finance allows

Kent PFI

We have already delivered one (PFI-funded) extra care scheme with another commenced during the later part of the summer 2014. This will see one of our sheltered schemes gifted to Kent County Council in return for 35 year nominations rights to the new extra-care sheltered housing facility that will be built in its place.

Enabling Extra Care Housing

Working with Housing Association partners we are delivering a further 3 extra care schemes, 1 urban and 2 rural. The urban scheme was negotiated as part of the S106 obligations the developer was resistant to providing affordable housing on the residential area. It was agreed instead to provide an extra care scheme of 67 units with a mix of affordable rent and shared ownership.

In our rural areas we are working with 2 housing associations to develop extra care schemes that it is envisaged will also offer services not only to the immediate locality but provide an outreach service to the wider, older, rural community. For one scheme the Council has made available land it owns on a long lease at a very low rent, for the other, working with planning colleagues were able to use policy to bring the extra care scheme nearer to existing facilities on an allocated site (to allow easy access) and extend residential development on to the adjoining exception site.

Forward planning:

Housing and planning officers work closely together to consider what older person accommodation and facilities should be provided in new developments. With large urban extensions planned it is essential older person needs are taken into consideration appropriate locations identified for accommodation. Wherever possible all residential accommodation should be built to be adaptable in future years to meet the needs of ageing occupants. The Borough has adopted Residential Space Standards

Supplementary Planning Document which includes lifetime homes as an advocated minimum standard. <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/supplementary-planning-documents>

The commissioning of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the Borough included a requirement for an assessment of the projected housing requirements of older people due to the changing age structure of the population through to 2030.

<http://www.ashford.gov.uk/local-plan-2030-evidence-base>