

EVALUATION OF ST GERMAIN'S GRANGE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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BACKGROUND

St Germain's Grange, Anchor's Extra-Care Scheme in Marske-by-the-Sea near Redcar in Cleveland, was opened in July 2001. It is a new-build property on the site previously occupied by a de-commissioned Local Authority home for older people. It provides 31 flats and guest accommodation plus communal facilities such as Café and hairdresser and an on-site care team.

St Germain's Grange was commissioned by Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council, who worked in close partnership with Anchor on this project, the first Extra-Care Scheme in the area and the first block contract for care that the authority had commissioned. In this scheme, Anchor is the provider for both Housing and Care.

The philosophy of St Germain's Grange was clearly the philosophy underpinning Anchor's model of Extra-Care, that of a community with mixed levels and types of need where the focus is upon promoting and maintaining independence.

This independent evaluation was commissioned by Anchor in order to explore the effectiveness of St Germain's Grange in 21 key areas, including

- Overall level of satisfaction of the tenants with the experience of living at St Germain's Grange.
- The nature and appropriateness of the building and location
- The allocation process, including the extent to which tenants are active participants in the process
- The extent to which independence is promoted and maintained and whether people were clear prior to taking up their tenancy that the focus is upon promoting and maintaining independence
- The impact of the move on tenants
- The nature of the population of St Germain's Grange and whether the mix of needs works in practice
- The extent to which St Germain's Grange meets people's needs for safety and security
- The extent to which on-site care provision can stabilise an individual's circumstances and whether they subsequently need less care input than in their previous environment
- The extent to which on-site care provision can respond flexibly to fluctuating levels of need
- The extent to which St Germain's Grange has challenged people's perceptions of what is possible
- Tenant participation and community presence

METHODOLOGY

Semi-structured interview schedules were developed, based on the methodology used by Helen Ogilvy Associates in similar evaluations. In-depth interviews were held with tenants of 10 flats and the views of the wider population were additionally sought in a mix of informal groups. Interviews were also held with 7 informal carers, 8 of the 12 care staff at St Germain's Grange, as well as the Scheme Manager and the Catering Supervisor. The Service Manager and the Contracts Officer from Redcar and Cleveland Social Services were interviewed as well as the social workers for 8 tenants who gave their consent. Access was also given to anonymised data relating to the tenants of all of the 29 flats occupied at the time of the evaluation. This data was prepared by the Local Authority as part of the Contract Monitoring process. Access was also given to Care Plans and weekly returns held at St Germain's Grange. Fieldwork was carried out between February and May 2002.

KEY FINDINGS

General issues

Overall levels of satisfaction were very high, with 90% of tenants saying that they were very satisfied and 10% quite satisfied with their experience of living at St Germain's Grange.

Key factors that tenants rated highly were

- High quality accommodation, with spacious rooms and wide corridors
- Own flat, with accommodation all on one level
- Good access, including dropped kerbs, automatic doors and lift to all floors
- Being able to do more for themselves due to the design of their accommodation
- 24 hour availability of help
- The helpful and supportive attitude of the Scheme Manager and the Care Team
- Focus on actively promoting independence
- The availability of a flexible Care Team on-site
- The combination of company being available but privacy also being easy to maintain
- Retaining links with their own community rather than having to move away when their care needs increased
- Feeling safe
- Having a Café on site, providing a range of meals at a reasonable price (with delivery to flat if necessary) and providing a natural social focus

Key factors that tenants rated less favourably were

- The length of the corridors
- The lack of a window in the kitchen
- The lack of automatic doors between the lift and the corridors

Location and Design

St Germain's Grange is located within 500m of a good variety of local shops and amenities in the village centre, such as small supermarket with newspapers and off-license, baker, butcher, chemist, iron-monger and take aways. It is also close to the Methodist church, the Cricket Club with its' social club and a local pub. The beach and Headland, a local beauty spot is nearby. All tenants liked the location and felt St Germain's Grange fitted in well. Many tenants are from Marske or have family members in the village and particularly valued the continuity of retaining links with a known community.

Although there had been strong feelings locally about the closure of the Local Authority residential home previously on the site, there was no evidence that this had translated into sustained resistance to St Germain's Grange. On the contrary, the indications were that it has been welcomed as a high quality replacement that has added something to their community. The growing waiting list of 76, most of whom were local, was taken as an indicator of the level of acceptance by the local community.

Tenants were very happy with the quality of the design of the building as a whole and of their flats in particular. Features that they particularly valued were:

- There is a locked door between those areas of the building that are open to the public, such as the Café, Launderette, Hairdresser and Day Centre and those areas that are for tenants only. This improves peoples' sense of security.
- Access to the building is good, with automatic doors and no steps or kerbs.
- The décor throughout is bright and the entrance hall is light and welcoming
- Flats are spacious and wheelchair access is good.
- Easy access showers mean that some people who previously needed assistance to shower or bathe are now independent in this respect
- Kitchen units and surfaces can be hung at different heights to accommodate different needs.
- The alarm call system, with pendant alarms available as required, increased people's sense of security.

The Allocation Process

Decisions around allocation of tenancies are taken in partnership; the Scheme Manager is an active participant. In allocating, a balance is sought between allocating to those with the highest priority and keeping the number of care hours within the parameters of the block contract, thus aiming to maintain a community with a mix of dependencies. Although social workers agree with this in principle, in practice it leads to some frustration that tenancies are at times allocated to people with lower priority needs in order to maintain the balance.

Tenants were happy with the way the allocation process was working. All those interviewed had seen St Germain's Grange before accepting the tenancy and all were confident that the decision to move had been theirs and theirs alone. All tenants and carers interviewed were satisfied with the quality, quantity and appropriateness of the information they received about St Germain's Grange prior to accepting the tenancy.

It was clear that good quality Assessments and Care Plans were being provided at the time of allocation to ensure that accurate decisions were made. The good relationship between staff at St Germain's Grange and social workers and fellow professionals ensured that any lack of clarity was soon addressed.

Promoting and Maintaining Independence

All tenants, carers and social workers interviewed were clear that an essential part of the philosophy at St Germain's Grange is that of promoting and maintaining people's independence as far as possible. Some quotes from tenants and carers help illustrate people's experience of this philosophy in action:

"When I'd had a fall I lost my confidence and didn't want to walk if I could avoid it. But once I (physically) recovered, they gently insisted I walk a bit further each day and rely less and less on the wheelchair. I'm glad they did."

"Yes, the staff encourage me but it's more than that. I feel more confident here somehow, and that makes me want to be more independent."

"They took over in (residential home). Here, I come and go as I please. There, it was very much their home; here it's definitely my home. It's a world of difference."

"The ordinary structures of life were falling away for mum. For example, time meant nothing so even having more visits from the home help wasn't any good, as she wouldn't remember to stay in. Here, life's ordinary structures such as having a meal or going to bed are maintained in a subtle way. I think mum feels safer and worries less so fewer problems arise. With a return to a routine, she feels better, looks better and copes better and can therefore retain her independence."

The Impact of the Move on Tenants

Tenants reported significant changes that the move had brought about for them. These included:

- 50% were sleeping better than in their previous accommodation while 50% reported no change in sleep pattern
- 30% reported needing to see their GP less often and 30% said they had needed fewer hospital admissions than previously. The other 70% reported no change for these factors.
- 40% thought that their physical health had improved, 40% reported no change while 20% reported a worsening, which was in keeping with the nature of their illness.
- 80% reported an improvement in their emotional wellbeing and their level of optimism for the future
- 50% thought that their relationship with their family had improved, the other 50% reported no change.
- 100% reported feeling safe and secure at St Germain's Grange whereas 50% had felt unsafe in their previous accommodation

The Nature of the Population at St Germain's Grange

St Germain's Grange is home to people who have a wide range of needs. At the time that fieldwork was done, 8 of the 31 flats were occupied by people with mental health needs and 5 flats were occupied by people who have a significant level of physical disability.

Does this mix work in practice? Based on interviews with tenants and staff, the answer is a clear yes. Staff find that the mix makes their work more interesting and a constant learning process. They also identified examples of tenants capitalising on their own strengths to assist other tenants.

Although there is a relatively high number of tenants with some degree of mental health needs, staff did not see this as an issue; they felt competent to respond. Tenants were also largely comfortable with the mix and although 2 expressed reservations about the number of people who wander, they too kept a watchful eye on them.

Safety and Security

All tenants reported feeling safe and secure at St Germain's Grange whereas 50% reported feeling unsafe in their previous accommodation. One tenant described how she had not felt safe enough to change into her night clothes during the last 9 months in her previous home and how she had had a very disturbed sleep pattern. She now sleeps well. Other similar stories emerged.

The factors that people mentioned as contributing to their sense of security were:

- Availability of help 24 hours per day
- Front doors locked from 4pm onwards so access is limited to tenants, staff and legitimate visitors
- Staff adopt a proactive stance on security, checking doors and windows at night, politely but firmly challenging any people they do not recognise in order to ensure that they have legitimate business in the building
- Locked door between the public domain and the private domain where people's flats are located
- Video-link from the front door to people's flats
- Pull cord alarm system in all flats with option of pendant alarm
- Spy-hole in flat doors, including one at suitable height for people using a wheelchair

One piece of evidence of people's sense of security is that many leave their flat doors open to encourage neighbours to pop in. It has become part of the culture that if the door is open, anyone is welcome to drop in. For many, this was a welcome return to what feels normal and what they had been used to in their previous home in safer times.

Impact of On-Site Care Provision

A comparison was made between the assessed level of need for each tenant at the point the tenancy was allocated and the actual level of care needed at 3 months and 6 months after the move. Data was gathered for 29 flats as 2 flats were vacant.

At 6 months, 1 person remained self-sufficient with no care input, 14 people had experienced a decrease of care needs totaling 51 hours and 30 minutes. The decreases ranged from 30 minutes to nearly 8 hours per week. The other 14 experienced increases totaling 49 hours and 35 minutes, ranging from 10 minutes to 10 hours and 5 minutes.

What the figures cannot show is the story behind these changes and the impact on people's quality of life. For example, two people needed an increase of 7 hours 15 minutes and 10 hours 5 minutes respectively due to substantial deterioration in their health. They subsequently died in hospital but had been able to remain in their own home in the latter stages of their life. Another tenant showed an increase of 2 hours 50 minutes, which also hides a success story. The tenant in question has a marked memory loss and in her previous home all attempts to increase care input failed because she forgot to stay in! Living in St Germain's Grange, with a Care Team who are able to work flexibly, has meant that people have been able to engage with her more easily. As a result, she feels more secure, is eating well and regularly, is having her medication at regular intervals and in the correct dosage and is sleeping well.

For 7 tenants, it was possible to make a comparison between the care input that people were receiving in their previous accommodation with the care input at 6 months. Substantial changes were noted and they are summarised below:

CHANGE PER WEEK	DESCRIPTION
Reduction of 4 hours 25 minutes	Increase in confidence knowing that someone is around. Reduction in breathing problems.
Reduction from residential care to 3 hours 45 minutes	Increase in confidence and improvement in mental health. Going out more and more assertive.
Change from all needs being met by family members to needing 2 hours 30 minutes	Due to good access to building, tenants are able to come and go without other assistance and need minimal help with care.
Reduction of 4 hours 40 minutes	Despite a reported increase in frailty and increase in falls, still need less than assessed as needing in the community
Reduction of 15 hours 30 minutes	Change from being doubly incontinent, immobile and requiring the support of 2 to transfer to being fully continent, mobile, motivated and interested in life.
Increase of 2 hours 50 minutes	Tenant with memory loss now able to live independently with an established routine and now engaging with a team of carers
Change from all needs being met by relative with whom tenant lived to living independently with 12 hours 35 minutes of care.	Both tenant and carer have regained their independence and a quality of life that had been lost to both of them

Flexibility of Care

Interviews with tenants, staff and social workers made it clear that there is a high level of flexibility in care delivery at St Germain's Grange. Some tenants reported that just knowing that flexibility was possible made them feel more confident.

The fact that the Care Team is on site brings immediate flexibility. This is increased by the nature of the block contract, which allows flexible use of the care hours within agreed limits. Therefore, it is not necessary to reassess people's needs and alter contracts for the sorts of fluctuation of need that one would expect most people to experience from time to time, for example, due to a temporary infection. (However, substantial changes over a sustained period would trigger a re-assessment.)

The flexibility of the block contract has particularly been welcomed by social workers as it cuts down on the volume of paperwork they have to do. They also find it makes it easier to communicate with the service provider in a professional way, without contractual details clouding practice issues. One worker said,

"I find it's easier to adopt a common sense approach to a problem if there is no contractual wrangling getting in the way."

Another said

"What I like about the block contract is that it allows people to have good and bad days without creating a mountain of paperwork and an application to panel. Our clients in the community just can't have bad days; it's so crazy. I mean, who doesn't have bad days? I suppose you could say the block contract lets people be human."

Challenging Perceptions

Key senior personnel within Social Services and social workers were asked whether their experience of Extra-Care at St Germain's Grange had changed their perception of what is possible. The simple answer is "Yes, very much so." Some quotes help illustrate the range of views:

"Our expectations are higher now we have seen what is possible at St Germain's and the difference it has made to people's lives."

"It definitely has changed perceptions. We all have ideals of what we would want for our clients and we are used to falling well short. I now feel that by securing a tenancy for someone at St Germain's Grange, I get pretty close to that ideal and that feels good."

"Very much so! I couldn't believe that anywhere could be all-singing, all-dancing with whistles and bells but for X, St Germain's is. But now we've got it, we want more!"

"Yes, it is an alternative to the traditional options we've had. Now it exists, it also influences Panel decisions, it makes us think differently."

Tenant Participation and Community Presence

This evaluation was carried out at the point where St Germain's Grange had been operational for about 6 months, which is a relatively early stage in the life of any community. Priority had rightly been given to the basics such as selecting tenants, ensuring that assessed needs were being met, ensuring that the staff team were competent and confident in this style of working and ensuring that care standards were established and consolidated. From the point of view of tenants, it has been enough to cope with the move, settling into a new environment and getting to know neighbours and staff. One would not therefore have expected substantial developments in terms of tenant participation and community presence.

However, there were positive signs of this happening. These included:

- The formal structure of Tenants Meetings was established
- Informal consultation happens naturally in the Café or in the foyer as the Manager makes a point of being approachable and available to people
- There is evidence of some activities happening naturally, as people gather in the evenings to play cards or board games and staff encourage this

- Some activities and entertainment has been organised to get people socialising
- Local Churches have started to hold some services there and to involve tenants in Church activities
- The Hairdresser, Launderette and Café at St Germain's Grange are open to the local community and word is starting to spread

Given the close knit nature of the community within which St Germain's Grange is located, it is likely that further community involvement will develop naturally as opportunities arise.

CONCLUSIONS

St Germain's Grange is clearly working well from everyone's point of view. Some of the factors that are thought to have contributed to the success are as follows:

- The philosophy of Extra-Care was adopted in its' entirety. This includes a focus on enabling and promoting independence, flexibility of care provision and a balanced community. This philosophy was clearly communicated to staff, tenants and referring agencies from the outset.
- The project was developed in close consultation with the Local Authority.
- This good working relationship and clear communication has been maintained and developed at all levels of contact between Anchor and the Local Authority.
- The Scheme Manager was fully committed to the philosophy of Extra-Care, had the knowledge and skills to translate it into action and showed enormous commitment to the project.
- The Scheme Manager received appropriate and timely support from her line managers.
- The Scheme Manager manages both Care and Housing.
- The staff team were recruited on attitude as well as skills and qualification
- The level of qualification and commitment in the Care Team is high
- St Germain's Grange serves a well-established and tight-knit community and many of the tenants have natural ties to this community.
- Many tenants know each other or knew of each other prior to the move.
- Links with the community are being actively pursued.
- The quality and design of the building, including the access, is excellent.
- Security arrangements are excellent.