

Housing Learning & Improvement Network

Care Services Improvement Partnership Health and Social Care
Change Agent Team

Transforming services for older people: floating support - Broadacres Housing Association Older Persons Floating Support

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Key partners:

Supporting People North Yorkshire
Age Concern

Brief description:

This case study considers how one housing association has shifted from a traditional warden service attached to sheltered housing schemes to a floating support service. The floating support service covers the associations sheltered housing schemes as well as being available to older people in the wider community irrespective of their tenure.

1. Background

Broadacres Housing Association (BHA) has 1600 properties designated for occupation by people over the age of 60 yrs - about a third of their total housing stock. Most of the properties are within Hambleton District Council area and are based on the 5 market towns of Northallerton, Thirsk, Easingwold, Bedale, Stokesley and Great Ayton. About 300 units are in villages surrounding the market towns. They have begun to develop within other areas of North Yorkshire but very few sheltered units. They have three Category 2 schemes, two in Northallerton and another in Thirsk the remainder are mainly bungalows, a few are flats. They also have two extra-care schemes, purpose built within the last 3 years. Applicants are awarded points and allocation is made on number of points together with date order of application. Applicants over the age of 60 are not means tested. About 65% of applicants qualify for SP subsidy.

2. Moving from traditional services to floating support

Prior to 2000, most BHA wardens lived within the boundary of their site of bungalows – some came to work in their area. All were full time and paid according to the number of units they served in a banding structure (between 30 to 80 units). Most were able to drive and were required to participate in an 'on call' rota for out of hours cover and were paid a standard fee. Their hours of work were 8am to 6pm with any 2 hours off during that period though they had to be available to respond to emergencies. 5 staff, one in each market town had a smaller scheme but were responsible for visiting a number of units in the villages on a weekly basis. They also fitted lifelines in the private sector.

BHA commissioned the Rural Housing Trust to do some work for them to help develop older people's services. Following their report in 2001, BHA moved towards a floating support service and piloted team working in a particular area. The team worked from a local office base equipped with computer access. Originally, staff worked a rota system covering between 9am to 9am Mon to Fri and 9 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. at weekends. Other staff covered 'on call' outside of these hours.

Reasons for moving to floating support:

- To ease the recruitment of staff by not requiring them to live on site
- To create a team environment and to equalise workloads
- To cover absences more effectively
- To operate over 7 days with a full service
- To limit possible 'abuse of power'
- To equalise the level of service provided regardless of whether the tenant lived in a market town or a surrounding village

Age Concern evaluated the pilot and following tenant and staff consultation, BHA rolled out floating support in stages across the district during 2002/03. Staff hours were agreed at 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mon to Fri and they established a separate waking 'out of hours' team with 6 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) – separate staff to the day staff. This service was funded through Supporting People with a capacity of 950 service users.

Staff salaries were re-evaluated leading to an increase. A FTE had a caseload of between 90 and 100 tenants. Local office bases were provided for teams to work from and staff were equipped with leased vans – by then everyone was a car driver. Staff living 'on site' were given the opportunity to move 'off site'. Those who remained 'on site' were not given tenants they previously served.

3. Post 2003

In 2004/05 BHA upgraded all scheme alarm systems (except Cat 2 schemes) from hardwired to dispersed alarms with linked smoke and CO2 detectors.

In 2004 they were required by Supporting People to review the 'out of hours' service due to its high cost. Costs were significantly reduced by moving to a mixture of 'working' hours from a local office and 'on call' from home. (All new day staff have within their contract a requirement to participate in the out of hours 'on call' rota). They managed to get this service changed to 'block gross' arguing it was a short-term service – ie it responded to changing needs. It now equates to £1.70 per week (based on 1600 clients).

4. Current position

Currently the service is tied to tenure. It is not a condition of tenancy as there is a separate support account and a separate support agreement and tenants must sign to accept the service. The cost is £11.22 per week for weekly visit and daily call, though tenants prior to April 2003 are protected at £4.56. Despite this BHA are subsidising the service.

BHA are now required by Supporting People to review both day and out of hours services again. The principles are:

- To offer choice from no service to at least 2 levels of service
- To de-designate some sheltered properties
- To reduce overall capacity
- To remove support service from tenure
- To be able to offer the service in the private sector

Although Supporting People require 24-hour response services, there is some doubt that the 'out of hours' service will survive in its current form. BHA may have to consider all day staff taking a turn of 'on call' from home, or otherwise contracting out.

It's looking as though BHA will move to a position of offering full choice in all but the cat 2 schemes. Apart from the choice of no service this will be 3 levels of service –

- Alarm unit with 24-hour response and annual visit (not eligible for Supporting People subsidy)
- As above with monthly visit, weekly call – eligible for Supporting People
- As above with weekly visit, daily call

Current staffing structure

Day Service – 2 supervisors reporting to operational manager (who is also responsible for extra care). About 8 FTE's reporting to each supervisor. Hours of work 8.30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Mon to Fri. There are 6 separate SP contracts based on the 6 teams of staff.

Out of hours – 1 supervisor reporting to call centre manager and 2 x 0.8 FTE's who work on a rota system from 4.45 p.m. to 8.45 p.m. Mon to Fri and 8.30 a.m. to 2.30 p.m. weekends. Two staff are on duty at these times to cover the area. On call operates from home outside of these hours – the rate is based on 25% of the hourly rate for each hour on call. 3 staff on call overnight – team supplemented by other staff on call from 8.30 p.m. to 8.30 a.m. over 7 days. There is one block gross contract

5. Lessons learned

- Shifting to a floating support service is not easy
- It was necessary to manage an overall reduction of staff to meet reduction in capacity/ Supporting People subsidy
- It can be difficult to work out caseload/staff for mixed service levels and make sure staff are in the right place in order to keep travel costs down to a minimum.
- There is a higher turnover of service users because they subscribe to the service much later
- The traditional model of sheltered housing relies on everyone contributing to and sharing in the warden service. If residents in sheltered housing have a choice to opt out how can they be supported when they need help? Also there are issues about residents missing out on access to preventative support and the impact this may have on their level of need at a later stage.
- In order to have the maximum number of service users the service needs to be marketed
- It can be difficult to move people from one level to another as their needs change, particularly self funders who may be reluctant to pay higher charges
- A shift away from a more traditional sheltered housing service can impact on lettings and allocations.

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- Case Study no.2: **Extra Care Strategic Developments in East Sussex**
- Case Study no.3: **'Least-use' Assistive Technology in Dementia Extra Care (Eastleigh)**
- Case Study no.5: **Village People: A Mixed Tenure Retirement Community (Bristol)**
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The Housing LIN welcomes contributions on a range of issues pertinent to Extra Care housing. If there is a subject that you feel should be addressed, please contact us.

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