



LEEDS
CITY COUNCIL

The Sheltered Housing Service

A guide to sheltered housing and other housing
services for older people

For people who live in sheltered housing or are
considering moving to sheltered housing

**This booklet is available in different community languages,
Braille, large print and audio tape**

Please contact us on Telephone Number - 2141801

What Is Sheltered Housing?

Sheltered housing is accommodation that is specifically provided for older people. In Leeds the minimum age to be eligible for sheltered housing is 60. However, younger people may be eligible if there are specific medical reasons why they may need the accommodation.

The Sheltered Housing Service - Our Values

- We will promote your choice to live independently.
- We will treat you with respect and dignity.
- We will respect your right to privacy and confidentiality.
- We will make our service accessible to all people who require it.
- We will promote your needs and views to other agencies to benefit both yourselves and other older people who live in the wider community.

Sheltered Housing - Types Of Accommodation Available

There is a wide range of sheltered accommodation types:

- Bedsits
- Bungalows
- Maisonettes
- Multi-Storey Flats

Sheltered housing is available in all areas of Leeds. There are differences in the demand for different types of accommodation and different schemes. Bedsits (one bedroom properties with no separate living room) tend to have lower demand and therefore are more readily available. Some sheltered housing is provided in separate schemes.

Other accommodation is interspersed with general needs housing. Some sheltered housing is purpose built for older people. Other housing has been converted from general needs provision. The sheltered housing in multi-storey flats has been converted from general needs housing.

Services Available In Sheltered Housing

All sheltered housing is connected to an emergency call system. The call system is linked to a twenty-four hour staffed control centre. An operative from the control centre will respond to your call promptly - we aim to do so within thirty seconds. Staff from the control centre will arrange the necessary support and assistance that you require. This could include contacting a friend or relative, that you have nominated, to come and help you.

Some sheltered housing schemes have resident housing wardens. Resident wardens are generally available at work for five out of any seven days. The functions of the wardens are as follows:

- Provide you with information and support to help you access suitable services. For example, help you apply for home care support through social services.
- Demonstrate how to use the emergency alarm call system and other sheltered housing equipment.
- Organise and promote social activities in schemes where communal facilities are available. Please note that you are under no obligation to participate in any of the social activities. It is entirely your choice whether you choose to do so.
- In an emergency respond to your request for assistance.
- In the absence of another nominated person, provide you with emergency support for a maximum of twenty-four hours.

- Visit you at your home to check your well-being at least every three days. We aim to visit you on at least three separate days out of every seven days. The warden will ensure that they have made visual contact with you on every occasion they visit. If they can not do so then they will arrange to gain access to your property in order to check whether you require assistance. We will only enter your home when we feel it is necessary as we respect your right to privacy. In the absence from work of the resident warden the Sheltered Housing Service will arrange for another member of staff to come and visit you.

Support Charges

In many Local Authorities sheltered housing tenants have been liable for support charges in addition to their rental payments. The support charge was to cover the cost of providing:

- The warden service.
- The emergency alarm service.
- Maintenance and cleaning of communal areas.

Leeds Sheltered Housing Service tenants have never been liable for support charges. The cost of providing these services was met out of the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department's wider funds.

However, from April 2003 a new system, Supporting People, was introduced to cover the cost of providing housing related support for services such as sheltered housing. The introduction of Supporting People has brought about important changes regarding support charging. It is important to note that the paying of support charges was not part of your tenancy agreement and therefore can not be changed because of the introduction of a new funding system.

- Tenants who moved into sheltered housing before April 2003 who are in receipt of Housing Benefit will have their support charge paid for out of Supporting People funds.
- Tenants who moved into sheltered housing before April 2003 who are not in receipt of any benefits will have the support charge paid for out of the Housing Revenue Account.
- These arrangements will be honoured for the duration of your tenancy. If you move it will be discretionary whether you have to commence paying the service charge. This decision will be made by the Leeds Supporting People Team.
- All households who move into sheltered housing from April 2003 onwards will be liable to pay a charge for support costs.

Recent Changes To Council Housing

The Sheltered Housing Service is part of the Leeds City Council Neighbourhoods and Housing Department. It was previously part of the Social Services Department. As part of a wider reorganisation of council departments the Housing Department merged on 1 April 2003 with the Community Planning and Regeneration Department to form the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department. This change will result in no immediate change in the service you receive in sheltered housing. The merger is designed to improve joint working between different services.

Before 1 February 2003 the Housing Department was also responsible for the day to day management of your property. However, from that date the management of all council properties was transferred to six Arms Length Management Organisations (ALMOs) These organisations each cover a specific area of Leeds. These are:

- Leeds West Homes

- Leeds North West Homes
- Leeds North East Homes
- Leeds South Homes
- Leeds South East Homes
- Leeds East Homes

Your property will continue to be owned by Leeds City Council. The council will also continue to be responsible for setting rents and your tenancy rights will not be affected. ALMOs are eligible for government funding (which will be used to finance improvements to the housing stock) providing that they can demonstrate they offer an 'excellent service'. It is also intended that these smaller organisations will also be responsive to the needs of local communities.

Applying For Sheltered Housing

All people who apply for sheltered housing must complete a Leeds Homes Register form. This is an application to be rehoused by the six ALMOs and a number of local Registered Social Landlords (Housing Associations). You must detail on your application form that you wish to be considered for sheltered housing.

The Neighbourhoods and Housing Department has a lettings policy that all housing providers are signatories to. Changes to simplify the lettings policy that were introduced in February 2003 are designed to make the process of finding a home easier.

Your housing need is now branded into three categories. These are:

- 'Priority Extra' – includes customers who are considered to have a high medical need to be rehoused or homeless people who are considered to be vulnerable and therefore less able to fend for themselves. Elderly homeless people will generally be placed into this category.
- 'Priority' – includes customers who are considered to have a medical need to be rehoused.
- 'General Needs' – all customers who do not fit into either of the priority categories

The category you are placed in will be determined by carrying out an assessment of your needs. The Neighbourhoods and Housing Department has a specialist Medical Rehousing Service. This team will make an assessment of your rehousing needs based upon your medical condition.

Alternatively an officer from the Leeds Homeless Service can carry out a homeless assessment to decide whether you are unintentionally homeless and vulnerable because of your age. For more information on your rights as a homeless person and the duties of the Leeds Homeless Service please see our guidebook 'Are you Homeless Now, Next Week, Next Year'. This guidebook is available in different community languages, Braille, large print and audio tape.

Traditionally the decision to allocate you a sheltered housing property was made by the manager of a particular Neighbourhood Housing Office. However, in February 2003 a new system of letting properties was introduced: 'Choice Based Lettings'.

'Choice Based Lettings' involves the advertisement of vacant properties using a variety of methods. At the Housing Advice Centre, Neighbourhood Housing Offices, on a free flier, on the internet and in the 'Ad Trader' magazine. Vacant sheltered housing properties will be advertised in this way. The advert will specify that the property is sheltered housing. Therefore, the letting of the property is restricted to customers who are eligible for sheltered housing.

Customers are expected to bid for available properties on a weekly basis. This can be done by filling in the property details on a coupon or by telephoning to speak to an

adviser. Customers will be offered a property on the basis of their housing need and other criteria set out in the property advert e.g. sheltered housing property.

Customers are generally only placed in the two priority categories for a three month period. After that period customers who have not secured a property may be placed in the 'General Needs' category. Under certain circumstances it may be decided that it is appropriate for a customer to retain their priority status. For example, if you are a disabled customer and no appropriate property has become available. If you are a homeless person with 'Priority Extra' status then we will make you an offer of a suitable property in order to fulfil our legal duty.

We recognise that the process of bidding for properties may be daunting especially if you have previously only experienced the traditional allocations policy. Please note that any member of staff from the Neighbourhoods and Housing Department or from an ALMO can assist you to bid for properties.

Your Rights As A Tenant

The creation of the ALMOs will not affect your tenancy rights. Most existing tenants will be secure tenants. Secure tenants have greater rights to remain in their homes than tenants with other agreements. If the council wanted to evict you from the property they would have to apply to the county court setting out the grounds for possession. The majority of grounds are discretionary. The grounds include:

- Non-payment of rent.
- Damage to the property.
- Nuisance behaviour in the local community.
- Where the property was occupied by a couple and one person has left the property because of violence from the other.

- The tenancy was secured by giving false information to the landlord.

There are other grounds for possession that are discretionary but where the council would have to find you alternative suitable accommodation. These include:

- The property is specifically designed for someone with special needs or a physical disability but where no one with those needs is living in the property.

Other grounds for possession are mandatory but the council has a duty to secure the tenant alternative suitable accommodation. These include:

- The property is illegally overcrowded.
- Your council intends to renovate or demolish the property

All new tenants are now placed on an introductory tenancy for the first 12 months of their tenancy. You will be informed that you are being placed on an introductory tenancy when you sign up for the property. After 12 months you will automatically transfer to a secure tenancy. Introductory tenancies are designed to make it easier for the council to evict tenants who have breached their tenancy agreements e.g. such as perpetrating anti-social behaviour in the local community. The council is still obliged to pursue the possession of a property through the courts but does not have to prove the grounds for possession.

You have the right to pass on your tenancy to someone else when you die. This is called the right of succession. Your husband and wife have an automatic right to succession. Other people (including your partner if you were not married) have a right to succession providing that they have lived with you for at least one year before you died and that they meet the eligibility criteria for sheltered housing.

Sheltered housing tenants do not have the 'Right to Buy' their properties.

You have the right to carry out improvements to your home. You must request permission in writing but your request can not be refused without an adequate reason.

You have the right to exchange your property with another tenant of a property managed by an ALMO. You must request this in writing but you can not be refused without an adequate reason. Please note that you can only exchange with someone who would be eligible for sheltered housing.

You have the right to have repairs carried out. The ALMOs are responsible for carrying out all the repairs relating to the structure, exterior and installations of the property.

Structure: roof, floors, walls and windows

Exterior: gutters, pipes and drains

Installations: plumbing and sanitation, electrical wiring, gas piping, water and central heating

Is Sheltered Housing For You?

Moving to sheltered housing is a big decision. You need to consider whether you feel it is a good option. Moving to sheltered housing may have a number of benefits:

- Moving to smaller home may be more manageable. However, you may also wish to consider the drawbacks of moving to smaller accommodation. For example, if you have a lot of furniture.
- Having the presence of a resident warden or the emergency call system may give you added peace of mind.
- Being in an living environment of people of a similar age and the opportunity to get involved in social activities. However, you may also wish to consider whether

you want to live in a scheme of exclusively elderly people.

You should remember that there are different types of sheltered housing. Both in terms of the actual accommodation and whether it is separate sheltered scheme or mixed with general needs housing. You can discuss these issues with staff from the Sheltered Housing Service who can help you decide what type of sheltered scheme is best for you.

You can also get adaptations made to your current home rather than moving to sheltered housing. The emergency call system is available to people who live in general needs housing. You can contact the Care Ring Marketing Team on 2243970 who can give you more details.

You may also wish to consider other issues such as the location of the property, whether there are adequate local amenities/transport links or whether there are restrictions on pets.

Complaints

If you have concerns relating to the conduct of staff or regarding any other aspect of the service we offer, then we would encourage you to make a complaint.

You can make a complaint in the following ways:

- Verbally
- Using the telephone
- By writing a letter
- By fax or email
- Using the complaints form on the council's website address - www.leeds.gov.uk

Any Neighbourhoods and Housing Department member of staff can help you to make a complaint.

You will receive a formal written response to your complaint within fifteen working days. You will also receive information as to how you can continue to pursue your complaint if you are not satisfied with the response given.

For more information on how to make a complaint please see our Complaints Guidebook. This is available in different community languages, Braille, large print and audio tape.

Contact Addresses (the following can help you make your complaint)

Shelter,
Housing Aid Centre,
52, Wellington Street,
Leeds.
LS1 2EE
Tel. No. (0113) 2442480

Citizens Advice Bureau,
Westminster Buildings,
31, New York Street,
Leeds.
LS2 7DT.
Tel. No. (0113) 2433339

Age Concern,
188A Woodhouse Lane,
Leeds
LS2 0DX
Tel. No. (0113) 2458579

St Anne's Shelter Housing Action,
66, York Street,
Leeds.
LS9 8AA
Tel. No. (0113) 2431894

St. George's Crypt,
CryptCare Centre,
Great George Street,
Leeds.
LS1 3BR.
Tel. No. (0113) 2459061.

Advice Information and Mediation Service
for Retirement Housing,
AIMS,
Astral House,
126A London Road,
SW 16 4ER
Tel. No. 0845 600 2001

Harehills Housing Aid,
301, Roundhay Road,
Leeds
LS8 4JB
(0113) 249 2492484