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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGY FOR THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT OF OLDER PEOPLE
REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

My Home, My Future, My Choice

STRATEGY FOR THE
HOUSING AND SUPPORT OF OLDER PEOPLE 2010-2026

JULY 2009
FORMAL

FOREWORD

This Strategy for Older Persons' Housing and Support has been commissioned by Redditch Borough Council's Housing, Leisure and Customer Services Directorate, to respond to the changing circumstances in its own designated older persons' housing stock, and to wide ranging external influences.

This is a time of considerable change for the sector, determined by an ageing population with changing expectations, an ageing portfolio of specialised accommodation developed largely in the 1970s and 1980s and by strong national policy drivers from Central Government.

These changes are not unique to Redditch and the process that Redditch is going through will be experienced in parallel by the majority of other local authority providers of housing and support to their older population.

Our approach is based on the same principles as the strategy for Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods and National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society: that everyone should be able to make a choice that mirrors their lifestyle and circumstances, above all to remain safely in their own home, near friends and family, as long as they would wish to, that good housing is essential for good health and well being, and should be valued and planned as such, and that as years go by there will be a choice of desirable housing with support and care to match changing capabilities. We have, therefore put our emphasis on what older people themselves have confirmed are their priorities for change: better information, more help with repairs and adaptations, the modernisation of reform of the Disabled Facilities Grant building Lifetime Homes and Neighbourhoods that will provide for lifetime changes of needs, and close articulation with health and care support – all within a more intelligent and responsible planning system.

Redditch Borough Council is committed to making positive changes in its housing and support in order to meet the needs of older people, and to deliver the strategic aims of national, regional and local policies. As a Council we hope that this document sets out the aspects of change that we need to manage, and the positive way that we propose to respond to them.

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Introduction

This Strategy is directed towards achieving for older people the principal objectives of:

- Ensuring they are socially included, and have a good quality of life
- Enabling them to live independently for as long as possible
- Preventing adverse health conditions that limit their independence
- Providing good quality homes that are appropriate to their needs
- Providing good quality housing support that is appropriate to their needs
- Focusing housing and support on those most in need, and on unmet needs

And to meeting the key needs of older people, as expressed within consultation, for:

• Independence and Privacy

• Safety and Security

• Support when needed

• Mobility at home and in the community

• Appropriate good quality housing

The Strategy aims to set the agenda and framework for the future of older persons' housing and support provided by the Borough over the next sixteen years and to anticipate and plan for, as far as possible, the needs as they are likely to emerge in the following years up to 2026.

The strategy ultimately aims to 'Make a Difference' for the older people of now and the future in Redditch. The Strategy will look at the services to be provided for older people, not as a problem to be solved, but a celebration of the fact that people are living longer and in better health.

Redditch values the past and future contributions of older people and aims for their social inclusion in the life of the Borough. We respect that they are individuals, with their own lives, needs and aspirations, and their own rights and responsibilities. We respect and value their diversity.

Older people are not simply users of services but are family members, grand-parents carers, friends and neighbours, volunteers, employees and contributors to the economy, and members of the community.

BACKGROUND

Sheltered housing and older persons' housing

Housing for older people has most commonly, in recent years, been known as sheltered housing. While this does describe the environment that providers have tried to create, there is undoubtedly also a negative connotation to the term, based on an unfounded belief that this means an 'old peoples' home' where the elderly are largely isolated. Consultation has shown that people do not like this term, because it takes away the sense of independence and dignity that they feel. Moreover, the term does not embrace the variety of provision that may be available. The term older persons' housing is therefore generally used within this strategy as replacement for the more familiar term 'sheltered' housing, although the latter term may be used in some contexts.

Older People - who the Strategy covers

There is no statutory definition of an older person; for some, such as the Office for National Statistics, the older person is defined as someone over the age of 50. The eligibility for state retirement pensions is currently 60 for women and 65 for men, (although this will be harmonised during 2010-2020). The usual age for eligibility for 'sheltered housing' has been 60.

The age that people want or need a different form of housing for their later years has, however, been rising, in line with an increasing desire to live independently for as long as possible and an increasing improvement in keeping in good health later into life. People tend to choose some form of older persons or 'sheltered' housing when circumstances change, for example when they cannot readily maintain their home any longer, or have a health problem that affects their mobility, or suffer the loss of a partner. For the most part, older people who need a change in environment will be in their 70s, 80s or 90s when they move into designated older persons' housing.

For these reasons the Strategy considers 'older people' to be those aged 65 or over. The Strategy does not preclude younger people from vulnerable groups from qualifying for 'older persons' housing or support, although they will normally be over the age of 50. More importantly, they will be in need of the housing or support service offered.

Where the report speaks of 'designated' housing for older people, the minimum entry level age is taken as 60; where it is open to 'younger tenants' then this refers to schemes who accept people from the age of 50 or 55, dependent on the particular scheme policy. Where the housing is de-designated, then the accommodation is open to people of any age, and would be more generally referred to as 'general housing'.

Types of older persons' housing

Older Persons' Housing is housing that is specially designated for that purpose. It may take the form of a bungalow or a flat. It may be dispersed, that is a single isolated unit, or it may be in a group of bungalows or a group of flats in a designated block. It may be a private scheme, or that of a registered social landlord, where flats are bought, rented or leased, within some form of retirement complex.

It may also be within an environment of more intensive support, such as in an 'extra care' scheme, where both housing and care functions are readily available, depending on people's changing needs. The Strategy does not, however, cover residential or 'care' homes where the person's primary need is health and personal care rather than housing.

Current categorisation of schemes

Current older persons' housing provision within Redditch Borough Council is defined according to four categories which relate to the level of support provided by the environment and facilities of the particular scheme.

The following terms are used within the Strategy:

Category 1: Specially designed housing for more active older people, without communal facilities but with fixed alarm and Home Support visiting service.

Category 1.5: Specially designed housing for older people with access to communal facilities adjacent to the scheme, including a fixed alarm and Home Support Visiting Service. Three of these schemes share the facilities of a nearby Category 2 scheme.

Category 2: Specially designed housing for older people with on-site access to communal facilities which can be accessed without going outside, including a fixed alarm and Home Support Visiting Service.

Category 2.5: Specially designed housing for older people with more intensive needs. Also known as Extra Care or 'very sheltered' housing, such schemes have access to communal facilities and the provision of additional support, such as 24-hour staffing and an on-site domiciliary care team and a fixed alarm

Redditch Borough Council currently has one Extra Care scheme, St. David's House, in Batchley. This scheme is not covered in this report, both because of its care focus and because its management and funding arrangements differ from other sheltered housing schemes.

Part 1: The background to change

1 NATIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

The Government provides a strong platform for change across all sectors of the population, including older people. Its main objectives can be summarised as social inclusion for all within a healthy and equal society. It envisages people as living in decent accommodation, independent and self determining from a range of choices. It aspires to deliver services as far as possible to people within communities rather than within critical health services. The key documents¹ that set out Government objectives and influence this Strategy include the following:

National Service Framework for Older People (DH March 2001)

Opportunity Age – Opportunity and security throughout life – the National Strategy on Ageing (DWP 2005)

Independence Well-Being and Choice (DH Green Paper 2005)

Our Health Our Care Our Say: a new direction for community services (DH 2006)

A Sure Start to Later Life: Ending Inequalities for Older People (ODPM 2006)

Independence and Opportunity - Our Strategy for Supporting People (DCLG 2007)

Quality and Choice: A Decent Home for All – The way forward for Housing (DETR, DSS December 2000)

Strategy for Housing Older People in England: The Housing Corporation (2003)

Homes for the Future: More Affordable, More Sustainable (DCLG 2007)

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods - A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society (CLG - DWP 2008)

¹ Fuller summary of national strategic documents plus bibliography

2 REGIONAL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

West Midlands Regional Housing Strategy 2005

The West Midlands Regional Assembly's Housing Strategy impacts upon the Strategy for the Housing and Support of Older People through the following expectations, which reflect nationally set government objectives, interpreted for the locality:

- Provision of sheltered and extra care accommodation and other types of housing suitable for older people.
- Positive response to the cultural traditions and requirements of elders from ethnic minorities.
- Identification of suitable sites within local Development Frameworks.
- Development of products or incentives that encourage older people occupying larger homes to move to smaller accommodation that meets their needs.
- Development of a role working with funding bodies to develop suitable products that mobilise capital tied up in their homes.
- Provision of services that help people maintain their homes in the private sector

Strategic Housing Market Assessment for the South Housing Market Area Of the West Midlands Region (March 2007)

The report assesses the future housing needs of the Sub-Region in order to inform the Regional Spatial Strategy and Local Development Plans. It looks at demographic trends and resultant housing requirements, including those of older people. The following forms part of the report:

- Demand for new households is largely created by the reduced rate of housing being freed up as people live longer and more independently.
- People's aspirations, and the availability of services, have combined to considerably reduce the appeal of some designated schemes, and as a result reduced the supply of family housing in both the public and private sectors.
- There has been very little provision of new housing designed to meet older peoples' aspirations in both private and public sectors and this need is unlikely to be met within the existing housing stock. Extra Care Housing are being

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developed around the country, few examples seem to have been achieved in the South Housing Market Area, apart from those at the upper end of the market.

- There is an opportunity to meet a range of unmet needs through a more concerted approach to the housing of older people, which will release family homes for rent for homeless households, first time buyers and for growing families.

3 COUNTY LEVEL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Older People's Strategy for Worcestershire 2006-2010

This Strategy, entitled 'Independent Living for Older People – Bringing Together Housing, Health and Social Care' is of fundamental importance to the way in which older persons' housing will develop in the Borough, not just to 2010 (linking with the Supporting People Strategy) but beyond, to the next 30 years.

The Strategy is directed towards all older people, not simply to those in specialised housing. It recognises the desire of older people to remain independent for as long as possible and the increasing length of time during which people are likely to be able to achieve this. It acknowledges the forecast growth in the older population and the increasing demand for services that this implies.

In line with Government thinking, the Strategy aims to ensure the social inclusion of older people in society, providing them with the services they need, in order to achieve the best possible quality of life, through a range of appropriate care and support services. Recognising that services may not be available to all on an equal basis the Strategy plans to address the following sectors: older people from BME Communities, people with sensory impairment, mental health problems; learning disabilities; older homeless people, those living in rural areas, and carers.

The principal focus is on inverting the pyramid of input, from most resources being concentrated at the acute end of the spectrum, to most resources being invested in prevention and early intervention, in order to promote the health, welfare and independence of older people, for as long as possible, in the community, thereby reducing the need for intensive support later.

The Strategy sees five levels of social inclusion, ranging from providing 'active ageing' opportunities for older citizens within their communities, prior to their needing services, through to acute support in care homes or hospitals. At every level, the direction promoted by the Strategy will have an impact on older people's housing and support in Redditch.

The first four levels will enable older people to live longer in their own homes, receiving the appropriate level of general or more specific support or care. These imply a significant potential growth for the Home Support Service and a continuing demand by older people for housing within the community. The highest level of inclusion, namely care and hospital, will have less impact on the Strategy, in that Redditch already has above-average care home resources when compared to other districts in the County.

The Worcestershire Supporting People Programme

Worcestershire Supporting People provides housing related support to adults, who may be vulnerable or have special needs by reason of their history or situation, their ability or age, to enable them to develop and sustain independent living.

This strategy is designed to meet the objectives of the Supporting People Programme set out in the 5 year Strategy 2005 – 2010.

The programme is supported by the key strategic partners from the District Councils, the County Council, the National Offender Management Services and the Primary Care Trust the programme supports in excess of 10,000 people with key aims in relation to health, social care and criminal justice.

The aim of the strategy in relation to older people is:-

- Early intervention services for older people with mental health needs.
- Low level preventative housing related intervention as provided by home improvement agencies, community alarms and assistive technology.
- Move from an accommodation based model of housing related support to a community based floating support service.
- Investment in extra care provision.

Over the next five years of the Strategy the Worcestershire Supporting People programme will move towards the provision of housing related support regardless of tenure. People will receive support based on their need, not on where they live. In order to meet this agenda, Redditch Borough Council will need to refocus its Supporting People funded services work away from an accommodation based service towards providing support for people in their own homes regardless of tenure.

4 REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

Redditch Borough Council ensures that it delivers the objectives of the Government, the Region, the County and its local population through a variety of strategic policy statements which set out the action required to achieve those aims.

Local Development Framework – Draft Core Strategy Development Plan Document Spatial Vision (October 2008)

The Redditch Sustainable Community Strategy has provided a foundation to develop a Spatial Vision for the Local Development Framework. The vision and priorities of the Sustainable Community Strategy have been considered in the formulation of the draft Core Strategy Development Plan Document and has included the aspirations of the Redditch community. This Spatial Vision sets out how Redditch Borough wants to be by 2026 and includes aspirations for high quality and safe design of residential units and to cater for the provision of services and facilities.

Corporate and Performance Plan 2009– 2012

The Corporate Plan is a key document that sets out the Council's vision and ambitions for the Borough and details how the Council will work towards achieving these.

In order to deliver its vision of 'an enterprising community which is safe, clean and green' the following three priority areas have been identified:

- Enterprising Community
- Safe
- Clean and Green

The actions identified in the plan are tangible and measurable, intended to have an impact on the lives of individuals. They also recognise the Council's wider role in Community Leadership and seek to 'make a difference'.

See web link www.redditch.whub.org.uk

Housing and Community Services Service Business Plan 2009-2010

The Service is responsible for both the housing and the support that is provided for older people in the Borough. Housing and Community Services has set out its own objectives in its Service Business Plan for 2009 to 2010. The three priority areas which relate to older person's housing and support are:

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- Ensure designated Older Persons housing is meeting the existing and future needs of the community by improved use of Housing stock by providing the right type of Older Persons Housing for now and the future in Redditch. Meet the needs of the vulnerable people in the private sector produce a business case to introduce a Private Sector Home Support Service (previously Community Warden Service).
- Enhance the Response Centre Alarm Service through assisted technology and working in the private sector. A Response Centre that is responsive to our customers needs enabling more older and vulnerable people to remain in their own homes through assisted technology.

Housing Strategy Statement 2005-2009

This statement encompasses the full range of housing responsibilities of the Borough and sets out how the Council will deliver the local and Regional agenda. It deals with the broad issues of housing need and affordability, homelessness and supported housing, the condition of Council housing stock and raising standards in the private sector. Of key relevance is the relative and actual growth in numbers of older people.

www.redditch.whub.org.uk

Housing Needs Survey 2006

Redditch Borough Council's latest Housing Needs Survey of October 2006 looks at the housing needs of the whole population of the Borough. Key points of relevance to the Older Persons' Strategy were:

- There is an 'inextricable link between ageing and disability' with over 54% of those with a support need being over the age of 60.
- While an implied 1,437 people indicated that they had elderly relatives (over 60) who may need to move to the Borough in the next three years, the Survey felt that the greater likelihood was that elderly people would prefer to remain in, and receive support at home.
- Children of elderly parents assessed that 23% would want Council sheltered housing; 20% private sheltered housing; 17% Housing Association sheltered housing and 17% residential or nursing home accommodation. 31% (480 households) indicated that their relative could live with them, but close to 300 of these felt the home would need adaptation or extension.
- The proposed development of an older persons' strategy to address the growth in elderly households, and their related care and support needs. It should prioritise services and adaptations needed to keep people in their own home, and assess how the existing sheltered stock meets contemporary standards and preferences.

5 DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE

Significant demographic change is taking place in the United Kingdom and also throughout much of Europe. There is both an increasing number of older people in the population, and an increasing proportion of them within the total population.

The 'Ageing Population' is a well known phenomenon, and is based on three principal factors: the falling birth rate; the fact that people are living longer and in better health; the population bulges of the late 1950's and early 60's are becoming statistically important in the context of planning for older people from 2011 onwards.

A detailed picture of the age structure of the UK population can be seen in national statistics as set out in 'Focus on Older People' (DWP 2005). The principal feature of concern to this Strategy is the pronounced 50–54 age group of baby boomers born after the Second World War, who will reach retirement age during the life of this Strategy. A further population bulge, arising from the 1960s baby boom, will begin to become evident after 2026.

The older population is currently growing twice as fast as the population as a whole. The 11 million people of pensionable age in 2003 will rise to 12.2 million in 2011 and to a peak of 15.3 million in 2031. People aged 85 and over represented 5.5 per cent of the 50 and over population in 2003, but are projected to be 9.1 per cent in 2031. While women outnumber men at older ages, the imbalance is projected to decrease in the future.

The Focus on Older People report (DWP 2005) gives valuable insights into a number of areas relevant to this Strategy:

- Marital status, family size, financial well being and health status determine whether older people live independently or with others, such as children, or in a care home. A significant trend of the last 50 years is the increasing proportion of older people who live alone, particularly as a result of the rising divorce rate. (Chapter 2)
- Housing arrangements are likely to be affected by changes in health, mobility or marital status. The condition of the houses which older people occupy has a strong impact on their quality of life. (Chapter 3)
- Older people's expectation of a disability-free life has increased over the years. Factors like housing, socio-economic status and income can contribute to health inequalities in later life. (Chapter 5)
- Older people make use of a variety of health and social care services apart from visiting GPs or going to the hospital, like seeing a dentist or chiropodist, and receiving informal care provided to them by their family members. (Chapter 6)

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- The level of income at the disposal of older people influences the amount of choice and independence that they are able to exercise. Lower income is more predominant among particular pensioner groups, for example, women, ethnic minorities and people in the oldest age groups. (Chapter 7)
- As people live longer they have more time to pursue leisure activities, although barriers, like lack of finance or poor health, can hinder this. Older people's lifestyles are influenced by their desire to participate in society and develop themselves, through involvement with clubs, societies, organisations, and with learning new skills. (Chapter 9)

Redditch will experience the same pressures as are evident in the rest of the UK and there is a clear imperative to plan services around the growing older persons' population.

Future needs projection in Redditch

The Strategy above examined the key issues of demographic change at the national level. For the purposes of future strategic planning and service delivery, this section looks at the local demographic issues affecting Redditch.

The following demographic data set has been produced with the assistance of Worcestershire County Council's Research and Intelligence Department and provides essential information on the changing demography of older people within Redditch and the potential housing and support needs issues that may result.

2007 Redditch population projections aged 65 or over						
65 to 69	70 to 74	75 to 79	80 to 84	85 to 89	90 + over	Total
3,000	2,500	2,200	1,400	1,000	400	10,500

From the 2007 Redditch population projections data², the 65 and over population is projected to grow to 11,200 in 2009, increasing by 31% to 14,700 in 2016, by a further 13% to 16,600 in 2021 and by 8% to 17,900 by 2026. These increases are both enormous and, in planning terms, an immediate challenge.

Between 2008 and 2026 the Borough will see an increase of 7,100 people who may potentially draw on its older peoples' services. For the population aged 75 and over, on whom most services are likely to be focused, then the increase over the same period is from 5,100 to 9,500 people, an increase of 86%.

² Population Projections for Redditch

Redditch population projections aged 65 or over: 5-year stages of growth						
Age	2008 Base	2010	2011	2016	2021	2026
All 65 and over:	10,800	11,700	12,100	14,700	16,600	17,900
Of whom: 75 and over	5,100	5,200	5,400	6,000	7,500	9,500

This growth relates to all older people in the Borough but not all will need or expect housing or support from public services. Future growth could be based on current patterns, for example older peoples' housing services are provided to approximately 10% of the 'older' population, and support services to 14%.

In terms of future housing supply, the strategic objectives are towards people being enabled to stay in their own homes. The need for specific separate housing will not therefore grow in direct line with population growth. The Borough is subject to the housing market assessments of the South Housing Market Area, and this will determine the type and location of any new housing.

On the support side there is expected to be a shift inwards of funding for support from higher levels of inclusion. Support services will also extend to the private sector, although there will be some corresponding decrease in the social sector. A projection of serving 20% of the older population seems a more realistic level for these services. Based on the projections 2008 – 2026, that would equate to 1,420 customers aged 65 years and over that would require support (of these 880 customers would be aged 75 years and over).

A variety of factors may impact on the eventual demand for housing and support, such as the housing marketplace and housing availability, improved health in later life, the impact of support and care coming to people in their own homes, the resources that might be available in the private sector, as well as more complex or unforeseen variables. The quoted figures can only be indicative and will need to be reviewed during the course of the Strategy.

The role of Redditch Borough Council is to encourage and enable such development at an appropriate pace. With lead-in times of four to five years for any significant development, there is considerable pressure to plan now for demand.

Projected Minority Ethnic Needs

The projected needs of the over-65 population from minority ethnic groups, based on County projections, require some qualification. The numbers of some groups are small, so that surveys or broad based assessments may over or underestimate the small actual count; projections for Redditch are based on County-level predictions, but the

local profile may not reflect those of the County as a whole; birth and mortality rates will vary between different groups³.

Clearly, these figures can only offer an indicative idea of the size of ethnic groups within the older persons' population. Demand on services will also vary widely between people with different ethnic profiles. Some groups, for example, may have higher levels of owner occupation; current immigration could potentially change the ethnic profile in twenty years time if this includes older workers or their parents; further immigration of older parents is possible from out of the area as they become less able; pressure on social housing could increase if current household arrangements become no longer workable for some families.

Future housing and support provision needs to be sensitive to the needs of different minority ethnic groups, which are projected to grow at a faster rate than the population as a whole. Appropriate future housing and support solutions can only be derived from further detailed discussion with those groups.

6 CURRENT PROVISION

Redditch Borough Council aims, through its provision of housing and support, to 'make a difference' to the lives of its older citizens. This provision, however, takes place within a wide spectrum of mechanisms that help make the lives of older people as comfortable, healthy and positive as possible.

Redditch Borough Council Housing

Redditch has a generous supply of housing specially designated for older persons, providing 1163 self-contained units of accommodation, in the form of flats, bungalows and older persons housing⁴.

The total stock available includes 38 Category 1 schemes, normally bungalow or flat developments, which constitute 63% of the total number of units. There are 11 Category 1.5 schemes which have access to communal accommodation (19%), and 10 Category 2 schemes which have integral communal facilities (17%).

Around 50% of the total number of units is made up of one or two-bed bungalows. Around 40% are one-bedroom flats; while the remainder are two-bedroom flats (40 units) bed-sit flats (94 units).

³ Projected minority ethnic needs demography

⁴ Schedules of RBC accommodation for older people by category

Private and Voluntary Sector Housing

Older people also have access to a wide range of other housing solutions, whether provided by Registered Social Landlords (RSL) (Housing Associations) or private sector housing companies. Dependent on the organisation, there are likely to be choices of renting, part-buying, leasing or outright purchase.

There are approximately 170 dwellings for older people, as at October 2007, that are available to rent from an RSL within the Borough. In addition to St. David's House, there are a further 58 extra-care bed spaces provided at Terry Spring Court. Redditch also has close to 150 units of accommodation available for purchase or lease from RSLs and private concerns⁵.

Housing Support - The Home Support Service

Through funding from Supporting People and Redditch Borough Council, older people who currently live in Council accommodation, can receive, in return for a small charge, the support of a visiting Home Support Service Officer service, provided at a level suited to their current needs. This may range from a daily to a monthly visit, with total flexibility to change according to the person's requirements of the time.

It is important to note that the number of designated older persons' dwellings and the number of people receiving the Home Support Service are not the same. The Home Support Service is available to all older, vulnerable tenants of Redditch Borough Council. A pilot is currently being undertaken to extend this service to all older vulnerable residents of the Borough where there is an assessed support need.

The Home Support Service is currently provided by six teams of Home Support Service Officers under separate Home Support Supervisors, comprising a total of 41 staff members equating to 29 full time equivalent staff (FTE). The Team is responsible for the well-being of nearly 1,800 older people, most of who are in older persons' housing, with a caseload of around 60-75 per FTE staff member.

The Home Support Service is a professional team of support workers, dedicated to empowering older tenants of Redditch Borough Council to manage their lives with as much independence, dignity and comfort as possible.

Housing Support - The Lifeline Service

Founded in 1989, Lifeline celebrates its 25th Anniversary this year. Through funding by Supporting People and the payment of a small weekly charge tenants of the Borough have access to a 24 hour Lifeline telecare service, an alarm installation that enables them to contact a response centre in the case of an emergency or for out of hours support from the Home Support Service Officers.

⁵ Summary of older person's accommodation in Redditch.

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The Lifeline Community Response Centre is staffed 24 hours, seven days a week and receives approximately 6,000 calls per month from the 5000 connections within Redditch and the surrounding areas. All calls received must be given the appropriate response, being it calling the emergency service, relatives, friend, warden or other agencies. The team also supports the Telecare Assisted technology which is available to help people live independently and is linked into their lifeline.

Other Support Inputs

Older People have access to a range of complementary services directed towards their health and wellbeing including transport concessions, Dial-A-Ride, Shopmobility, Care and Repair for the private sector, Equipment and Adaptations for Council Tenants, Community Meals, the Health Service, the County Council, Voluntary Agencies, the local community and their families⁶.

⁶ Further details of other support inputs.

Part 2: Consultation

7 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

In developing this strategy we have sought out the views from people aged 45 years and over to reflect the long term of the strategy. Different methods of consultation have been carried out by the Home Support Service and Officers. This ranged from consultation with:-

Staff:

Who were asked to complete questionnaires on the different schemes and the service currently being provided.

Tenants / Residents:

Through focus groups, taking the consultation out into the community using the local large stores to capture as wide a group of older people as possible to complete questionnaires.

Agencies:

Prior to consultation a conference was held for agencies and partners to enable the Council to explain why there was a need for the strategy and ensure the work being carried out linked into other agencies objectives for older persons.

These consultations took many forms and included:-

- **Consultation with Individual tenants**
- **'Shape the Future' Consultation**
- **'Living Life to the Full' Consultation**
- **Visualisation consultation**
- **Mini Consultation in Scheme**
- **Consultation with the Home Support Service**
- **Anchor Housing and Age Concern Redditch**
- **Minority Ethnic Groups**
- **Consultation with Special Needs Tenancy Officers**
- **Consultation in Scheme Assessments**

- **Customer feedback on Home Support and Lifeline Services**
- **My Home, My Future, My Choice Consultation**

A summary of the consultation can be found in the background papers. (Appendix 7)

Principal among these is the specific consultation exercise carried out during July 2007, **My Home, My Future, My Choice Consultation** as part of the Strategy process, which valuably reached some 1000+ people. A report following this consultation can be found at Annex 2 of this document.

It was agreed from the start that, while a range of consultation exercises that had previously been undertaken would be of relevance to this Strategy, it was advisable to draw up a new format in order to capture a wider spectrum of opinions, and from as wide an audience as possible.

The principal findings of the exercise and the themes to be addressed can be summarised as follows:

- Older peoples' principal requirement was for 'their own front door'.
- Also of prime importance, were having an environment of security and safety, the support of a call system and visiting support staff, proximity to shops or town and good transport links.
- Practical assistance and visiting services from, for example, the chiropodist, was also highly ranked.
- Given a free choice of desirable attributes, even the lowest ranking, the gym facility, was selected by 20% of people, and 20 people put this in their top five priorities.
- 80% of respondents felt they were satisfactorily housed, but for those who felt they were not, the most common reasons were poor public transport (11.8%), the need for family or friends to support them (11.3%), difficulty in managing their homes (9.6%), noisy or difficult neighbours (9.4%), difficulty in affording their accommodation (8.0%), and homes that were either too large or too small (both 7.9%).
- Owner occupiers and Redditch Borough Council tenants were the most satisfied.
- 97% of people wanted to stay in their own homes for as long as possible, the number expecting to receive support to do so was 73%.
- Around half of people would only consider older persons' housing if it was the

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only option available to them. Four out of ten, however, have never visited a scheme. A third do not have a positive view about housing for older people.

- There is a need for better information about peoples' choices when they get older.
- A valuable source of subjective views can be found in the collected comments made by people within their responses, across a range of issues, including design, mobility, support services, landscape maintenance and anti-social behaviour⁷.

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7 Summary of consultation

Part 3: Older peoples' services 2010-2026

8 OLDER PEOPLES' HOUSING STOCK

Setting standards for Older Persons' schemes

The Strategy sought to answer the basic question of 'how suitable is the current older persons' housing stock for tenants?' From consultation with tenants, the Home Support Service, prospective future residents and from the wealth of literature on older peoples' expectations, it was possible to define some of the key indicators that made housing schemes of good quality, fit for purpose and valued by tenants. The following indicators of fitness were established for designated older person's accommodation:

Indicator of Fitness	
1	Dwellings are of an adequate size
2	Dwellings are readily accessible
3	Dwellings are suitable for wheelchair users
4	Dwellings are well located for access to facilities, and in a suitable environment
5	Dwellings have acceptable internal environments
6	Dwellings have acceptable external environments
7	Dwellings have a good level of security
8	Dwellings have adequate privacy
9	Residents have access to communal interaction
10	Residents have integral facilities within their dwellings
11	Residents occupy a dwelling in a designated scheme for older people
12	Residents have a positive image of their homes
13	Residents are adequately supported by practical aids
14	Residents are adequately supported by professional inputs
15	Residents have adequate access to parking

Each standard was assessed on a traffic light system of green for satisfactory, amber for requiring attention and red for being unsatisfactory and not likely to be remediable. A fuller description of each of these indicators and an explanation of the process undertaken is available.⁸

The assessments have looked ahead, to determine whether Redditch older persons' housing will accommodate people when their needs increase, in line with the strategic objectives of enabling independence for as long as possible, and providing care and support to people in their own homes. The assessments have also attempted to look ahead to the standards that people might be asking for in 10 or 20 years time.

⁸ Fitness for purpose indicators

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The Assessments cannot be comprehensive; individual tenants in individual schemes may have specific matters that they consider affect the quality, condition or management of the scheme they live in, but these are likely to be details to be addressed at a local level, rather than in an overall assessment. Nor do the standards, in general, cover 'housing plus' provision, such as recreational, educational or health opportunities. Negative indications against any of these standards may lead to customer dissatisfaction, and potentially void problems, and suggest a need for monitoring, review or change.

Each assessment includes an 'Outcome' of the assessment made, together, with recommendations where appropriate. This will invariably result in a recommendation that the scheme remains designated where the ratings are predominantly green. A significant number of amber and red ratings are likely to result in recommendations involving change, in many cases de-designation, in some cases more radical action.

The individual assessments within background documents exclude Standards 8, 13 and 14 because 100% of schemes meet these three indicators. All older people within RBC schemes have:

- the ability to live in **privacy**
- access to **physical improvements** to enhance their independent living,
- access to **professional housing support** through **Home Support** and **Lifeline** services.

They have however been retained on the summary sheets in order to give a rounded picture of the comparative fitness of designated housing.

Scheme assessments against the standards

All of the older persons' housing stock was assessed against the agreed standards. Background Papers show a summary by Category after any proposed works⁹. The possible outcomes of the assessments have been that:

- The scheme is retained as older persons' housing, subject to recommendations about work needed.
- The scheme is de-designated from older persons' housing.
- The scheme is partially retained and partially de-designated.

⁹ Scheme assessments by Category

RETAIN AS OLDER PERSONS' HOUSING

Retention of a scheme means that the housing should only be offered to those aged 60 or over or those with special needs, on the basis that these people will be most likely to benefit from the special design, facilities or location of the dwelling, either now or at some time in the future.

Retention of a scheme does **not** automatically mean that its current or future residents will be in receipt of Housing Support Services, as these will be provided on the basis of need, rather than location. However, there is no intention of withdrawing such services without due assessment of need, and residents who have support needs will continue to be supported by the Home Support Service.

DE-DESIGNATION FROM OLDER PERSONS' HOUSING

De-designation primarily means that the scheme will not be reserved for those aged 60 or over or those with special needs. De-designation, however affects different schemes in different ways, since a number are already open to younger age groups, be they 50+ or 55+. It does **not** necessarily mean that the dwellings become part of the general let stock, open to people of any age. In each case, the attributes of the scheme will be carefully considered, and be subject to a local lettings plan, and as far as practicable will respect the needs of existing tenants. A suggested process has been set out for use in any instance where a scheme might be de-designated, or otherwise changed¹⁰.

No current tenant of such accommodation would be expected to leave their homes unless they chose to do so, and they would be given priority, subject to having an appropriate level of need, for re-location to housing that did remain designated. A large number of current residents do not, in any case, meet the over 60/special need tariff, but are within schemes because the tariff age has been lowered to ensure the maintenance of acceptable occupancy levels, rather than because they need this special facility.

The total Redditch stock does not change as a result of these tariff changes; people aged 50+ will continue to have access to the total housing stock, including those proposed for de-designation.

The result of implementing the above recommendations involves the eventual loss of around 330 dwellings from *designated* older persons' housing, essentially on the grounds of their current unsuitability for that purpose. Importantly, these changes release housing support tied to specific accommodation, enabling these services to be provided on the basis of need rather than on the basis of their location within designated schemes.

¹⁰ Change management process

Improvements to bathrooms

Bathroom renewals have been on a standardised format, despite the fact that these may not be suitable for older people with mobility problems. It would appear sensible for bathroom improvement programmes to include the provision of level access shower rooms. While this may involve additional cost up front, there would be an eventual saving when the bathroom may later need adaptations for mobility reasons.

Improvements in Assisted Access

Accommodation for older people in the past has perhaps been developed without sufficient consideration of the mobility difficulties that people may face later in life.

Given the high likelihood of older people already having mobility problems when first coming into housing designated for older persons', or developing them during their stay, there is a clear imperative for any such accommodation above ground floor level to have assisted access in the form of a passenger lift, or possibly a chairlift. Without such aids the accommodation cannot be deemed to be accessible for this group of people.

Of the designated older persons' schemes in the Borough, only four schemes (excluding St. David's House, the Category 2.5 Extra Care scheme) currently have passenger lift access:

- ✓ Ibstock House
- ✓ Auxerre House
- ✓ Roxboro House
- ✓ Arthur Jobson House

A feasibility study has been carried out to establish the viability of installing lifts in other schemes. Of these, only four others were considered viable in terms of physical feasibility and cost effectiveness of the lift to dwelling ratio:

Scheme	Number of lifts	Number of units served	Lift/dwelling ratio	£ Estimate cost Prices revised to 2007 estimates
Harry Taylor House	1	13	1:13	45,000
Mendip House	1	10	1:10	45,000
Malvern House	2	16	1:8	90,000
Downsell House	2	14	1:7	90,000

The first of these schemes, Harry Taylor House, has a chairlift installed on the communal stairways.

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No other schemes, beyond those listed above, have a realistic option of having a lift installed, either on account of the physical limitations of the property concerned, or the limited number of people that a lift might serve. Chiltern House, for example, provides 35 dwellings, but these are arranged in six blocks with their own separate entrances. Even if it was possible to find space within the structure, or the design of the building allowed an add-on structure, each would only serve six dwellings in a staircase group, and effectively only the four flats above ground floor.

Within the remainder of the portfolio of designated older persons' housing at above ground floor level, no lift, even where installation was feasible, would serve more than four dwellings, which is considered to be below a viable level (See list of schemes¹¹).

In order to achieve mobility standards so far as possible, given physical and value for money considerations, lift installations for Mendip House, Malvern House and Downsell House are possible, which would provide 40 further units with full access.

Communal Facilities

Communal facilities differentiate a 'sheltered' or older persons housing from simply a block of flats occupied by older people. By definition, only Category 1.5 and Category 2 schemes have communal facilities; in the first category, these facilities are not integral to the complete scheme, but are on site or nearby; in Category 2 schemes the communal facilities are all within the property. Other facilities provided may include a laundry, guest room, communal shower, communal W.C., shared kitchen, shared lift access and communal gardens. The distribution of communal facilities, and a fuller discussion of their usage, is provided as a background document.¹²

Communal lounges

Although there are an average of 100 'events' per communal lounge each year there is considerable variation in usage, in that some schemes have regular activity, often as a result of time put in by Home Support Service Officers or others, while some are used only sporadically. The usage within schemes by their tenants is also a variable, with some participating regularly, while others have little or no interest in the community aspects of the lounge. There also appears to be conflict in some schemes between older residents who wish to see their lounges used traditionally, while others, particularly younger residents, may see the communal lounge as simply an extension of their personal space.

11 Schedule of schemes where lift installation is not feasible

12 Communal facilities

Within the consultation, communal lounges came 12th in rank both within the total wish list choices and in the selection of top 5 choices. Combining the communal lounge and 'active and sociable group' choices however, would change these ranks to 2nd in terms of the total choices and 9th in terms of top five choices. This would indicate that society and friendship are important to people, but perhaps that not all communal lounges offer people what they want.

The communal lounge can play a significant role in the drive towards greater involvement in the community, in active ageing and ensuring that people are not isolated or excluded. Many communal lounges currently have activities such as social clubs, luncheon clubs, or keep fit classes that involve their local community. There is potential for these arrangements to be extended for the benefit of both residents and visitors, widening social contact and ensuring greater inclusion.

Laundry facilities are used an average 900 times per scheme annually, raising corresponding revenue. Where possible, however, it is desirable for people to have the laundry facility within their own flat, and this should be an objective in all improvement programmes. As time progresses, arrangements which depend on people having to traverse communal areas in order to do their laundry is likely to become less and less acceptable, and is likely to affect lettable.

Guest Bedrooms are provided in 11 schemes with a modest charge applied for their usage. Average usage is in the order of once a month and this low level of occupancy means that the guest bedroom is an underused resource. Where there are clearly better uses that could be made of the space, these could be surrendered, with perhaps 3 or 4 being protected for cross-scheme usage. A review of each schemes guest bedroom would need to be made and proposals made on the alternative use.

Communal Showers have limited usage by an estimated 13 people each day in total, with a maximum of six persons in one scheme. While bathroom improvements will hopefully render the communal shower largely redundant in the future, they are an essential asset at the present time, and are useful for when assisted bathing is required or as a reserve facility in case of difficulties in any one flat.

Communal Gardens or other external spaces are important for psychological reasons even where individual tenants may not personally use the gardens. In selections of all the scheme attributes the garden area came 8th among the 20 choices.

Design recommendations arising from Scheme Assessments

A range of design and specification aspects, which have been raised as issues within scheme assessments and consultation, have been set out as an internal checklist for future development of, or the modification of existing, accommodation for older people in Redditch¹³.

The Strategy acknowledges the extensive body of new legislation, requirements, advice and information that govern housing standards today. It recommends that use of the locally generated recommendations might help avoid design problems for older people. Also, in the interests of efficiency, application of these standards may reduce the need for later modifications, or the need for ad hoc assistance, for example when someone is unable to deal with a tripped fuse because of its location.

Difficult to Let Housing, Voids and Rent Loss

'Difficult to Let Sheltered Housing' (HMSO 1995) revealed that 92% of local authorities and 79% of large housing associations had some sheltered housing, typically 10% that they deemed difficult to let, and that 'Category 2' housing (with a Home Support Service, some communal facilities and an alarm system) were generally the most difficult to let.

The research found that the reasons for older persons' housing being difficult to let were largely due to one or more of the following: the accommodation was in a bed-sit format; the accommodation was on the first floor without a lift, suitable washing facilities were provided by communal washing machines, schemes were located in 'problem' areas, or in areas where shops or public transport were lacking, or there was over-provision partly due to older people being assisted to remain in their own homes.

Many of these reasons are true of Redditch Borough Council properties that have proved difficult to let, and could become more prevalent as peoples' quality expectations rise. The report noted that most authorities had tried to address the issues, and these involved: refurbishment; better marketing of the properties, changing allocation policies, changing the use of the whole scheme, or disposal of the scheme.

The fact that a property is difficult to let implies that the service being provided is either not what is wanted, or that there is no demand for that service in that locality. As a provider and enabler of public services, Redditch Borough Council would not wish to offer services that people do not want. Neither, if there is a cost implication, would it wish to wastefully expend resources, which could be used to greater effect elsewhere, on such provision.

¹³ Design recommendations arising from scheme assessments.

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In the past Redditch has had to respond to voids losses within the older person housing stock, and has done so in some cases by de-designation, and more recently in others, through the reduction of entry ages into some schemes, from 60 down to 55 or 50. Around 15% of tenants in older people's services are aged under 60, having been granted tenancies through changes in the allocation policy or on the basis of disability or a mental health condition.

Analysis of voids should be considered with some caution because the headline figures may not always reflect the actuality of the situation; a high level of offers made before a property is let may indicate a problem with the accommodation, but equally it may relate to the status of the potential applicant.

In an analysis of the offers made on one and two bedroom 'difficult to let older persons' housing in the five years to March 2008, size and area were clearly frequent reasons for refusal, but far more were due to nil responses, inappropriate timing, withdrawn or for unspecified reasons. The review showed the following reasons for offers not being accepted: No response 123; Timing inappropriate 59; Wrong area 57; too small 56; Withdrawn 23; Poor condition 9; Other 178.

Details of voids performance within Older Persons' Housing, from which a number of conclusions can be made are set out in a separate schedule. Key conclusions are:

- voids performance has significantly improved between the last and the current financial years, due in part to a lower age criteria.
- re-let times are significantly less for both Category 1 and Category 1.5 schemes than they are for Category 2 schemes.
- the performance of Category 2 schemes with and without lifts is similar; but not all schemes with lifts are easier to let, because other factors come into play, such as location, age mix or design of the property.
- Category 2 schemes have a considerable presence of bed sits, alone providing 10% of the difficult to let voids.
- bungalows, and ground floor flats in Category 1 schemes, perform better than the average, and can be considered the most desirable properties to tenants, and also to Redditch Borough Council on the basis of their financial performance.
- generally performing the worst are bed sits and flats above the ground floor, although again there needs to be a note of caution as to whether the presence of a lift has a greater impact than the nature of the property itself.
- for properties with no waiting list, the highest number were those in Category 2 with 80% of the total.

- applicants who had not been made offers were very specific about their choice of area, the most requested being: Astwood Bank, Headless Cross, Lodge Park, and Batchley.

Since the introduction of Redditch Home Choice the number of people on the housing waiting list has increased by 54%. The increase is due to the fact that the Council's Allocations Policy has changed to allow owner-occupiers and individuals from outside the area to apply for properties and the change in the economic climate. These changes have resulted in there being less difficult to let properties than previously experienced but more allocations going to those in lower housing need. In order for this strategy to be brought up to date we will need to revisit the analysis previously done in 2006.

Age mix in Older Persons' Housing

Due to higher than acceptable levels of voids in certain schemes, a number have had their entry ages reduced to 55 or 50, meaning that, in those schemes, generally much older people are having to share their communal areas with younger tenants. In itself, this is not, by definition, problematic. The Home Support Service can point to many examples where the younger members of a scheme bring positive attitudes and input, and can be of help to their older neighbours.

However, there are also many examples of conflict between the lifestyles of some younger residents and those of at least some of the older people. This may involve bringing in partners, family and friends, use of communal areas out of hours, noise, alcohol consumption and anti-social behaviour. Many younger residents are at work, which means their movements may be out of step with those who have retired. They are more likely to be car owners, and compete for the limited car parking spaces. They may consider their flat only as their home, not their home within a community of older people, and may engage only in passing with their neighbours.

Redditch Home Choice, the newly introduced system of allocating Council properties, provides the category of 'accommodation for applicants of 50 years or more who require supported or sheltered accommodation'. This narrows the eligibility criteria beyond the pure eligibility of age, through the use of the term 'require', but further work is needed on how that requirement should be assessed.

Consultation tells us that safety and security are among the top priorities that older people seek from their housing. In the scheme assessments, we believed that any change of tenure to people of younger age groups, without support needs, was likely to bring people into the scheme who had different lifestyles, and there was a fair amount of evidence that this had resulted in a changed environment and a loss of 'shelter' for others, particularly the much older who form a large proportion of the residents.

Housing Enablement

Redditch Borough Council, as the local Housing and Planning authority has a Statutory duty to ensure that strategic planning of the Borough is conducive to meeting local needs, including those of housing for all of the population, including the support needs of vulnerable groups, such as older people.

In terms of housing delivery, the key priority for the Authority is to progress the development of affordable housing to meet existing and arising housing needs from all client groups within the community, including from older people, who, as demographic analysis shows, will become the most numerous group in Redditch's population over the life of this strategy.

The Authority has an active and innovative housing enabling programme, based on robust and thorough housing needs assessment across all client groups, carried out every three to five years, through clear strategic planning (the Local Development Framework) and through its Housing Strategy Statement.

The role of the Council is to enable others, predominantly Registered Social Landlords (RSL), to meet identified needs. The Council works in close partnership with RSLs to ensure appropriate provision, location and design. The Authority has a preferred partner's agreement: Redditch Co-Op Homes and the Accord Group, Festival Housing, Rooftop Housing Group, Sanctuary Housing and BDHT/West Mercia to deliver new affordable housing, meeting the needs of all client groups within the Borough.

The private sector is also in a position to meet needs, but the Council has only planning control over their proposals, including in some cases through Section 106 (Planning Gain) contributions. There is no direct link between what Redditch Borough Council identifies as a need and what a private developer may propose, although, in practice, the Council does work with developers to help influence suitability and appropriateness. The introduction of the Developer Housing Grant which will become available during the course of this Strategy may have a potentially significant impact on how new housing is delivered.

Models of provision

Dependent on the provision in their locality, older people can access a range of other housing and/or care options. There is a considerable spectrum of models within the public, voluntary and private sectors such as:

- **Extra Care**

Redditch Borough Council manages an Extra Care scheme at St. David's House in Batchley, comprising 35 flats, and 19 bungalows, in Queen's Cottages, which provide both independent living and care support as people's needs change. The Extra Care

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Charitable Trust and Touchstone Housing, provide 40 units of 'very sheltered' accommodation at Terry Spring Court close to Redditch Town Centre.

- **Retirement Villages in the Voluntary Sector**

The Retirement Village is an increasingly available resource across the country. The retirement village normally offers both a home for life, but also has the ability to bring in 24-hour care support for those that require it. The prime focus is on providing safe and secure housing together with facilities that support independence, health and well-being. The facilities can be extensive in larger schemes providing facilities such as restaurants, gyms, jacuzzis, computer rooms on site. A variety of tenure arrangements may be available from shared ownership, to rent or lease.

While such provision may not be immediately attractive to some, and may have cost implications for others, there is no doubt that the model provides a number of positive features, including independence, safety and security and access to support and care services.

- **Retirement homes in the private sector**

The Private Sector offers a range of retirement options which include flats for sale or lease within retirement complexes of varying cost and sophistication. Some will simply be suitably designed for older people with mobility problems, together with caretaker services. Others aim for a luxurious environment along the lines of a country house hotel or resort, although these would only be options for people with more resources. Private sheltered housing offers a genuine option for many older people, although the current provision in the Borough is limited.

The health benefits of living in a supportive community of like-minded people were among the key findings of an independent report 'A Better Life: Private Sheltered Housing and Independent Living for Older People' (McCarthy & Stone 2003).

Almost a third of current residents highlighted companionship as the single greatest advantage of private sheltered housing, while two-thirds said they enjoyed their lifestyle more than in their previous home. Their findings showed that lonely people, whether young or old, experience more stress than people who are not lonely and that they also find it harder to deal with stress, partly because they enjoy poor quality sleep and because they are less likely to seek help from others.

Independence is enhanced: 58% of residents said they had become less dependent on their children and 59% enjoyed a more independent lifestyle than they did in their previous home. 88% of residents believed that private sheltered housing helped improve their personal security and over a half cited security as a major advantage of a purpose-built retirement flat. 92% of residents said they would recommend their way of life to their friends.

9 HOUSING SUPPORT

The Home Support Service

The Home Support Service is clearly highly valued by the people who receive its support, as described within consultation evidence. The service gives people a sense of security and safety, and the ability to live in relative independence without the fear of isolation or of being forgotten, or of having to face problems alone. It helps make the links between housing, health and general well-being, on behalf of its customers, rather than for its customers.

The Home Support and Lifeline Services are central to the agenda of creating 'independence, well-being and choice' for older people and it is therefore incumbent that this service is fully supported in its role, as part of the network of integrated services that contribute towards positive ageing.

The Supporting People agenda, complementing national and local objectives, seeks to support people in their own homes, based on individual needs, rather than in institutions and based on location. This means that the service will expand beyond its traditional boundaries and reach out into the broader community, to the private sector, and to people's homes rather than simply to identified schemes. This is a significant change of direction.

To support independent living through the Worcestershire Neighbourhood Network (WINN), Redditch Borough Council applied for grants and were successful in obtaining £6k. With this funding the Home Support Service Officers were able to introduce activities for older persons to help them get out into the community, such as Tai Chi, musical outings, swimming, indoor games.

The swimming sessions have been organised in partnership with this Council's Leisure Services and transport provided through the Council's Dial-a-Ride service. On average 15-20 people attend these sessions each week supported by our Home Support Service Officers in the pool.

Some of the comments of those who have attended are:

"the swimming is helping with my arthritis I can move around easier".

"swimming has given me a very good social afternoon".

"I had a stroke 2 years ago, swimming has helped my muscles, its good physiotherapy".
"after my accident 12 months ago I lost all my confidence, and was apprehensive about attending swimming, I only wish I had heard about these swimming sessions sooner".

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The aim is to increase the attendance and help people build on their relationships so that they can continue to attend all of these activities independently in the future.

Housing Support Service - Funding

The Home Support Service is partly funded through Supporting People and enables older people who are tenants of Redditch Borough Council and of Registered Social Landlords to receive housing support that enables them to maintain their tenancies and live independently.

From April 2009 Supporting People pays a monthly amount to the Council for every person receiving the service who is eligible to receive it free of charge due to their personal income level (means-tested). The service must clearly demonstrate that this person has been supported between 1 and 3 hours per week. The service is paid a set hourly rate based on the number of hours of support it provides. The Council is liable for the difference between the charge made and the amount paid by Supporting People. This is funded through the Housing Revenue Account.

The financial structures of the Home Support Service are not dealt with in this Strategy as this will form part of the Review of the Service, which will take place soon. However, the Strategy does suggest that:

- charging structures are fully examined, since the across-the-board charges do not necessarily reflect the cost of the service that people receive, for example, the additional costs of maintaining a communal lounge, or the time involvement of staff in supporting activities are not paid for by the people receiving the service. It is acknowledged, however, that not all costs may be readily identifiable, such as the costs of landscaping, which are part of a global budget within the Council.
- greater spending authority might be delegated to Home Support Service Officers who work closely with schemes and their tenants, and who could effect more immediate and responsive actions, when local problems are identified.
- The 'Individual Budget', whereby support is subject to individual choice, could have a very significant longer term effect on finance and charging. Supporting People are currently running a number of pilots looking at greater involvement by service users in determining the support they receive.

Home Support Service - customer profile

It is important to demonstrate that Redditch Borough Council's services for older people are appropriately targeted and that they meet the diverse needs of the population. The key attributes of the client group taken over Quarter 4 of 2006/2007 are set out in a background paper¹⁴

63% of tenants are aged 70 or over, 30% are aged over 80. Greater age is not in itself an indicator of support need for an individual and there are those in the younger age groups who will have equivalent needs to some in the over-80 groups.

80% of tenants suffer from a significant medical condition, which is likely to affect their ability to manage on their own, particularly in terms of mobility. The incidence of medical issues is likely to mean a greater dependence on the interventions of other agencies, such as general practitioners, district nurses, or equipment and adaptations services.

The Home Support Service Officers have identified through their questionnaires a range of other attributes for which older tenants may need assistance and support. For example loneliness, low self-esteem, borderline depression, poor coping skills, can blight the daily life of someone who feels socially isolated and can affect their ability to manage their homes successfully and independently.

The total minority ethnic element receiving older persons' housing and support is 1.35% against a profile within the Borough of 7.5%. The largest single group in the Borough are those of Pakistani origin, representing 2.2% of the population, but with only 4 service users among 1,859 they constitute only 0.2% of service users. This echoes the findings of the Housing Corporation's 'Tenants Survey – Older People' which contrasted the BME population in housing association older persons' housing at 1%, against the 4% in general housing and 7% in tenancies.

Home Support Service – service levels

Home Support Service Officers visit tenants according to their needs or their current level of risk, so that someone who is able and currently well may have a minimum visit of once a month. Someone in a crisis, for example suffering an episode of ill-health, bereavement or returning from a hospital stay may require daily visits to ensure their well-being. And, of course, there are shades of need between these two opposites.

14 Profile of Home Support Service Users

There are variations in the profile of visits between different patches, according to the relative general needs of the tenants and variations over time for each Home Support Service Officer according to changing needs. The Home Support Service made over 7,500 visits in the period from April to June 2007, to over 1,450 service users in 800 hours of support time. Over 250 people receive only a low-level maintenance service and may be potentially deemed as not in need of support.

The Home Support Service - the private sector

There is no reason to suppose that people have any less need of support simply because they live in the private sector. Indeed, this group of old people are more likely to live in poorer accommodation in the private sector, with 45% of those over 85 living in homes that did not meet decency standards. People in the private sector are also possibly less likely to be in touch with public services, and might as a result suffer greater social exclusion.

The 1999 report 'To Have and to Hold: The bond between older people and the homes they own' concluded that older owner-occupiers were firmly committed to owning their own home, but ownership concealed some anxieties and difficulties. The independence and the financial aspects of ownership were both beneficial and burdensome, and partly influenced views about moving home and about institutional care. This underlines the strongly expressed views of respondents to our consultation exercise for remaining in their own homes as long as possible.

The declared aim of Supporting People is to extend community support to the private sector, with its strategic aim that 'Housing related support is provided regardless of type of housing'. This is endorsed by the local commitment to 'extend the Home Support Service to include private sector clients on a pilot basis, with the aim of increasing the number of service users for the same level of staff'. This will be an important shift in focus for the service.

It is likely that this new marketplace would be met through both the withdrawal of support from those tenants that do not in fact need the service and from growth in funding. The extension of services to the private sector will form part of the Review of the Home Support Service.

Lifeline Community Alarm Service – Telecare and Assistive Technology

As a valued service, the Borough would wish to see Lifeline services extended to, and made accessible to, all those in need of such support. All tenants of sheltered housing currently have access to the Community Alarm service 24/7 as well as over 700 tenants living in the Borough in the public sector and over 600 owner occupiers. The service is also available to Registered Social Landlords who pay a small charge, as do owners of private retirement homes who wish to use the service.

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGY FOR THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT OF OLDER PEOPLE

Its declared objective is to 'increase the number of users from the private sector for the Lifeline service, by restructuring the charges to avoid a significant up front charge to the user and promoting the service more effectively'. This objective is fully compliant with the overall aims of social inclusion as set out in the Worcestershire Strategy, and complements the variety of other inputs that help older people live independently.

Since 2006 six sheltered schemes have had their community alarm systems upgraded to be telecare enabled also several hundred dispersed units, which are also telecare enabled, have been installed in the Borough. By being telecare enabled, a specific package of different sensors can be installed to assist and pro long independent living for a particular tenant or resident. There are over 30 different sensors but the most usual ones are a pendant, falls detector, flood detector or smoke detector.

To promote this service in partnership with WiNN the Worcestershire Neighbourhood Network and Worcestershire County Council, the Housing Department identified an empty flat in Mendip House (sheltered scheme), in which the community alarm team were able to install equipment and furnish, to use as a demonstration flat for agencies and prospective tenants to visit. The sensors installed include items such as falls, smoke, gas temperature and flood detectors and a system whereby a light will switch on when a person gets out of bed and will switch off when the person returns to bed however a call will be put through to the operator if the person does not return to bed within a given time period. The operator will speak to the person, if there is no response an ambulance, relative or Home Support Service Officer will be contacted.

The demonstration flat has been a great success, with people from all over the county visiting.

Telecare can also be telecommunications-based support which can discretely monitor someone's well being from the home and is useful for people who have acute medical conditions. The unit currently in use in Redditch is Vivatec a monitor worn on the wrist, the information gathered is relayed back to the base unit which down loads the information into a computer which is accessed by the Community Matron or Doctor if accessed regularly any signs can be addressed early preventing an admission to hospital.

In 2007 the Community Alarm Service entered into a contract with Worcestershire County Council to provide, install, monitor and maintain telecare within the Borough to residents who meet Social Services criteria for the service. Worcester County Council, from funding from the Preventative Technologies Grant, provides this service free to the residents apart from a small monitoring charge payable by the resident to Redditch Borough Council.

Partnership

The work of the Home Support Service is dependent on its successful partnerships with other agencies which provide input to support older people across their social, medical, psychological and practical needs.

The Service is, in large part, a signposting one, bringing in, or referring individuals on to, other support as it is needed. The Service needs to ensure that, along with these partners, people have their needs met in as painless and seamless a way as possible, with minimum inconvenience, so that they can maintain as much independence, dignity and well-being as they can manage.

Maintaining good relationships, through open, ongoing and honest dialogue, with individual staff and with the organisations concerned is essential. This needs to be matched by the sharing of information so that all parties are aware of changes and developments that affect the work they do in common.

Other support

Derived from consultation there is clearly a strong demand among older people for other services that support their independence, in particular, assistance with gardening, decorating and maintenance, either because they are unable to do it themselves, or because the costs of employing contractors from the open market are simply too expensive.

Certain practical services do exist, for example the handyman service provided by Age Concern, it will be important to continue to work with our partners and monitor such provision to ensure it meets demand. A decorating scheme for Redditch tenants used to exist, but had to be ended; those that recall this clearly valued it highly.

Also emerging from consultation is the issue of transport which a number of people find problematic, especially at weekends. While this is not, of itself, a housing or support matter, it is something that affects peoples' satisfaction with their homes, and the promotion of improved services would clearly benefit a significant number of older people.

Involving Older People

This Strategy intends to meet both strategic objectives and the aspirations and needs as expressed by older people themselves within consultation.

Progress and success can be measured by the organisations involved, but also monitored by the direct involvement of the principal stakeholders. For this reason, it may be appropriate for older people to have a stronger and more direct voice about the issues that affect them, beyond the avenues that exist at present.

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REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL - STRATEGY FOR THE HOUSING AND SUPPORT OF OLDER PEOPLE

Given the Government's objective of joined up services, operating in partnership, for the benefit and social inclusion of all its citizens, there may be a case for establishing a broader collective of older people able to constructively contribute to the development, improvement and integration of services.

Its purpose would be to ensure that the expressed needs and aspirations, as above, are met as far as reasonably possible. The Council will progress these ideas further with the Older Person Forum in Redditch and through there consultation on implementing this strategy.

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VISION FOR OLDER PERSON'S SERVICES FOR THE FUTURE

Redditch aims to deliver independence, quality and choice in older people's services over the following decades, and will ensure that its policies are developed to achieve these objectives. It expects the future for housing and support for older people to have the following features:

- Older People are treated as valued citizens, not forgotten or hidden away.
- They have a valued voice that informs decision making.
- They continue to benefit from Redditch's high quality standards.
- They have a higher level of priority within Redditch services.
- Their housing allows for their future mobility needs from the start.
- There is a range of provision attractive to a range of people.
- The specific needs of under represented groups are met by appropriate provision.
- The housing and support that people want is protected.
- The housing that people do not want is relinquished for other use..
- Future development meets the highest standards of sustainability.
- They have as much independence as their health allows.
- They will have more services coming to their homes.
- Support is provided to those who are in most need.
- Support is provided to those in the private sector on an equal basis.
- They have opportunities for 'active ageing' and more community activity.
- More activity is based locally, sometimes using current communal lounges.
- The Council continues to work in positive partnership with other agencies.
- Organisations pursue a common agenda determined by formal links and reporting.
- Organisations have a common forum in which issues are discussed.
- The Home Support Service is structured to meet the current circumstances.
- Older people have ready access to good quality information available to all, including financial information such as on equity release.
- Housing and support is increased in line with population growth.
- People will be assisted to leave accommodation which exceeds their needs.
- New services are developed that contribute to independent living.
- Other non-housing support inputs are improved or increased as necessary.
- Where unforeseen change occurs, Redditch will plan accordingly.

10 PRIORITIES

The following priorities have been identified:

PRIORITY 1: Ensure Older Persons housing is responsive to demographic change in the period 2010-2026

PRIORITY 2: Ensure Older Persons support is responsive to demographic change in the period 2010-2026

PRIORITY 3: To ensure service users are fully informed and involved and their views are taken into consideration.

11 RECOMMENDATIONS

- Implement Action Plan.
- Enable the provision of additional older persons housing over the period 2010-2026 to meet the demand for changing demography.
- Carry out a review of the Home Support Service to ensure the service can be sustained with supporting people funding, to include a feasibility of expanding into the private sector, taking into consideration that Supporting People funding will be part of the LAA investigate the long term impact of this on funding the service.
- Investigate potential funding and feasibility for lifts in older persons schemes.
- Consider the potential for walk in showers in the bathroom replacement programme.
- Commission a comprehensive option appraisal of schemes where assessments indicate closure of the scheme for the current use.
- Develop an allocation process for Older Persons Housing.
- Establish a procedure to consult with all tenants on future recommendations of this strategy.
- Introduce Local Lettings Plans.

12 ACTION PLAN

An Action Plan, derived from the recommendations above, for implementation by Redditch Borough Council, forms part of this report. (See Annex 2).

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