

Subject: Out of Hours Sheltered Service

Date of Meeting: 7 March 2011

Report of: Head of Housing & Social Inclusion

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Key Decision:

Wards Affected: East Brighton, Goldsmid, Hangleton & Knoll, Hanover & Elm Grove, Hollingdean & Stamner, Moulscomb & Bevendean, North Portslade, Patcham, Queens Park, South Porstlade, St. Peters & North Laine, Westbourne, Wish.

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:

1.1 This report is to consider the recommended changes to the weekend call service and the service to sheltered housing tenants after out of hours.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

2.1 That Housing Management Consultative Committee considers and recommends for approval to the Housing Cabinet Member Meeting the report.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Twelve proposals to revise the out of hours and weekend service provided to sheltered tenants were identified by the tenant-led focus group, and agreed by Sheltered Housing Action Group.

3.1. CareLink Plus Service

3.2. CareLink Plus is a community alarm service owned by Brighton and Hove City Council. It is the only local alarm service and unlike some commercial alarm services, offers a service whereby its officers can attend to emergencies. CareLink Plus has Telecare Services Association accreditation and was voted 'Public Service of the Year' in 2010's Brighton & Hove Public Services Awards.

- 3.3. **(Proposal 1).** The sheltered service should continue to use CareLink Plus service (subject to the council's procurement policies and procedures)..
- 3.4. **(Proposal 2).** Sheltered services retain the home visiting service offered by CareLink Plus.
- 3.5. **(Proposal 3).** CareLink Plus should visit each sheltered scheme at least annually to talk about the service they provide and listen for comments. CareLink Plus should also undertake the same level of customer satisfaction monitoring that is provided to older people using their service in the community.
- 3.6. **(Proposal 4).** Residents, nominated through (and reporting back to) Sheltered Housing Action Group should routinely meet with CareLink Plus to scrutinise their performance.
- 3.7. **Responding to Community Alarm Responses Out of Hours:**
- 3.8. All sheltered homes are supplied with emergency alarms so that residents can alert someone in an emergency. During normal office hours (Monday to Friday) these calls are answered by the scheme manager. Out of hours, these calls are answered by CareLink Plus.
- 3.9. **(Proposal 5).** CareLink Plus should include the option of contacting a named emergency contact where an alarm is activated by a sheltered resident out of hours.
- 3.10. **(Proposal 6).** CareLink Plus should use details of any 'key holder' where this would help the emergency services gain access in an emergency.
- 3.11. To help implement proposals 5 and 6, sheltered services would write to all named emergency contacts and key holder so (1) they are clearer of the services offered by sheltered service and CareLink Plus, and (2) how they can help in an emergency, and (3) to seek their authority for CareLink Plus to contact them in an emergency.
- 3.12. **(Proposal 7).** Sheltered Services should consider key safes to enable better access for the emergency services only. Key safes could either be provided on a scheme basis (with a key safe installed in the main lobby containing a 'master key') or on an individual basis.
- 3.13. **(Proposal 8).** CareLink Plus should include the option of contacting a nominated tenant volunteer within the block when responding to a 'no-voice' response alarm activation in the common ways e.g. lift or common room.

3.14. **Weekend Call Service**

3.15. Sheltered residents can receive a 'call' using the alarm system each morning to ensure that they are alright. Unlike some sheltered providers, the council's sheltered services offers a weekend call alongside the weekday call service. This weekend service has been provided by staff employed by sheltered services to work only at weekends and Bank Holidays. Difficulties in recruiting, maintaining and supporting weekend staff has resulted in a limited weekend service.

3.16. **(Proposal 9)**. A full weekend call service (Saturday, Sunday, Bank Holidays) should be restored, but targeted at those without any other weekend contact and where there is a known vulnerability.

3.17. The tenant-led focus group recommend for the purpose of the weekend call service that 'vulnerability' be defined as:

- People who are unwell and with a serious or terminal illness.
- People with a disability (including learning disability) or long term frailty.
- People with a substantial or identified risk or exceptional circumstances e.g. anti social behaviour

Their focus-group recommended that the scheme manager has the primary responsibility of determining vulnerability, based on their supportive role at the sheltered scheme.

3.18. **(Proposal 10)**. The current weekend service should be protected for all those sheltered tenants who currently receive a call.

3.19. **(Proposal 11)**. CareLink Plus should have the primary responsibility of carrying out the weekend call.

3.20. **(Proposal 12)**. To ensure that contact through weekend is effective, scheme managers should establish a greater role in monitoring social care plans (although the primary responsibilities for monitoring health and social care provision will remain with health and social care).

3.21. To help implement proposals 9 to 12 sheltered services would write to all those identified as vulnerable (and in need of a weekend call) so their authority can be obtained for passing this information to CareLink Plus.

3.22. **Benefits of Revised Service**

3.23. Involving emergency contacts more will ensure a closer relationship between relatives and families and the services that support sheltered residents.

- 3.24. Better promotion and use of key holder information will mean that emergency services are able to access sheltered residents quicker in an emergency.
- 3.25. There will be more clarity about the role of the weekend service. At present it has tried to replicate the weekday scheme manager service with substantially fewer staff. The revised weekend service will be promoted as a service to help the most vulnerable.
- 3.26. The revised weekend service will be delivered by an organisation that currently provides a continual service during the 365 days of the year (rather than staff only employed to work at weekend and through staff overtime arrangements). This is therefore a more sustainable provision of the weekend service.
- 3.27. The revised weekend and out of hours service will be easier for people to understand since all out of hours service provision will be delivered by CareLink Plus (rather than a combination of CareLink Plus and out of hours sheltered staff).
- 3.28. The revised weekend and out of hours service will ensure better communication between the scheme manager and staff responding to out of hours issues. At present, mobile sheltered officers are not able to speak to the scheme manager since they work at different times of the week.
- 3.29. To ensure that the revised service works effectively, working arrangements will be reviewed after 12 months of implementation, with a more substantive service review (including a review of the alarm provider) within 3 years of implementation. These reviews will be tenant-led.

3.30. Cost Implications

- 3.31. The cost of the current weekend service (including stand-by payments for building related responses) for financial year was £50k in 2009/10 and £43k in 2010/11. This lower cost in 2009/10 was due to a staff leaver. These costs include standby costs to CareLink Plus and overtime costs to sheltered staff
- 3.32. CareLink Plus is proposing the revised weekend and out of hours service to cost £29k (plus a cost approximated at about £200 for each Bank Holiday covered). This excludes the cost of the current mobile officer who will be retained at a current cost of £12k. The cost of the revised service based upon the proposal is therefore expected at £42k.

4. CONSULTATION

- 4.1 A tenant-led focus group identified areas of improvement to the weekend call

service and the out of hours service. An initial report of the focus group was submitted to HMCC in December 2009.

4.2 Sheltered Housing Action Group considered the improvements identified by the focus-group at their meetings in August and November 2010. All the proposals to change the service were put to the vote and unanimously agreed upon, as recorded in their minutes.

4.3 A questionnaire on the sheltered service was sent to all sheltered households in December 2010 as part of the housing management consultation on service pledges. 212 questionnaires were returned. The majority of respondents agreed that the council continue a weekend call service (78.7%), that this should be delivered by CareLink Plus (89.9%) and targeted at the most vulnerable (76.1%). The majority of respondents agreed that where an emergency contact has been given by the tenant, that they should be contacted in an emergency (85.2%).

5. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Financial Implications

This enhanced out-of-hours service for our sheltered residents will be provided at no extra cost to the HRA.

*Finance Officer Consulted: Monica Brooks
2011*

Date: 17th February

5.2 Legal Implications

There do not appear to be any Human rights issues which would be a cause for concern.

The definition of vulnerable adopted by the tenants consultation, contains a definition of disability – this is a broad term but one that is acceptable under the Equalities Act and does not breach any of the requirements in that act, indeed it will help with equalities issues.

As there will be lists of individuals both who will receive support and who are 'named' contact points care will have to be taken when compiling those lists and where possible permission should be obtained specifying the purpose for which we seek to set up the list.

In relation to proposal 7 access to the key safes will have to be limited and they should be very secure to avoid liability if they were misused.

In relation to proposal 8 this would have to be limited to common ways and I would advise against any entry in to private places. As they act as a Council 'agent' we will be responsible for their actions. Adequate training should be given to them in emergency responses.

As is the case when any local authority extends support and assistance we are also responsible if that support and assistance is provided in a negligent way. We should ensure that there are regular checks to ensure compliance and safe working practices.

Lawyer consulted: Simon Court Date: 7.2.11

5.3 Equalities Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken.

5.4 Sustainability Implications:

The revised service is a more sustainable option of providing the weekend call service since it utilises an organisation that already operates an effective 24/7 service.

5.5 Crime & Disorder Implications

There are no crime and disorder implications.

5.6. Risk and Opportunity Management Implications:

This represents an opportunity to revise and improve a key aspect of the sheltered service in partnership with the Sheltered Housing Action Group. The revised service will provide a more tailored service at a lower cost.

There is a risk that if the current weekend services are not revised that this service will not be sustainable in the future.

5.7 Corporate / Citywide Implications:

There are no corporate/city wide implications.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The council could stop any weekend call service, as not all sheltered providers carry out a weekend call. However, consultation has shown that the provision of a weekend call, albeit for the most vulnerable only, is still a desired service.

6.2 The council could retain the current service arrangements. However, there is a fundamental service weakness in the current structure for the weekend call service. Namely that weekend staff have no direct contact with staff delivering the week day service nor the managers who support them.

6.3 The council could reduce the level of service from CareLink Plus, ceasing the home call element. Not all emergency call services offer a home call element. This would further reduce the cost of service. However, this option is not recommended as nearly a third of sheltered residents do not have an emergency contact.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 These are contained within the body of the report.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

None

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

HMCC Report 7 December 2009

Report of Out of Hours Working Group to SHAG (9 August 2010)

Equality Impact Assessment.

