

## **CHAPTER 5 WHAT SERVICES DO OLDER PEOPLE IN CAMBRIDGESHIRE WANT ...**

### **1. Methodology**

- Focus groups were held with:
  - Residents living in nine sheltered schemes in the County
  - Older people living in non sheltered accommodation

Note: Residents from more than one sheltered scheme attended each focus group

- We requested that staff did not attend the meetings. This request was adhered to in two of the three groups. We consider that the outcomes in the group where staff attended were less robust. They were asked not to contribute to the discussion, but we felt that the participants were less forthcoming as a result of their presence
- The questions asked of both groups were substantially the same but were varied as required to take account of tenure

### **2. Profile of the Participants**

- The residents living in sheltered housing lived in both rural and urban locations and this is reflected in their responses
- Two groups were held with participants living in non-sheltered accommodation. In one group a substantial number of participants were professionals who had gained experience of the sector through their working lives and this appeared to influence their responses

#### **2.1.1 Summary of key findings – questions to residents of sheltered housing**

##### **2.1.2 The Scheme Manager Service**

- Residents appeared very satisfied with SM services on the whole. The exceptions raised were:
  - The lack of staff at weekends
  - Some concerns over the absence of 24 hour warden presence on site
  - Problems caused because of the long term illness of SM and then long recruitment process – but complementary about management service during this difficult time
  - The SM spending too much time on administration
  - The perception that the SM was always on training courses

- When asked about the service received if they called the SM in an emergency the responses were all positive although the lack of an SM living on site was mentioned by some respondents
- When asked if there were any other services the LA / HA should offer the following responses were generated:
  - More social activities – there was a perception that these services had diminished over the years
  - Others mentioned that residents' groups provided services, e.g. a lunch club but there was a concern that members were becoming too old to provide the service
  - Some participants felt that Social Services should provide additional services, not the landlord
  - Others mentioned services provided by Voluntary Agencies so did not perceive a necessity for the landlord to become involved
  - Lack of transport was a major concern for many participants and the availability / frequency of services depended on the location of their scheme. Participants in rural areas appeared to have most problems
  - Although not directly related some residents mentioned that they considered that their landlord was letting properties to residents with high care needs whom they considered required residential care and that services available on the scheme were not suitable – other participants agreed with this
- Participants commented that they were happy with the alarm service they received. Also a good percentage of participants had used the service in an emergency and considered that the service received was efficient and comforting
- Participants considered the alarm service was good value for money. Others commented that you could not put a price on it because it offered them security
- Participants were asked if they felt the alarm service could be extended to offer other services. The responses varied:
  - Even when prompted one group found it difficult to comprehend the concept
  - Other groups could see the benefit of additional services but could not see themselves needing them
- When asked if their current accommodation suited their needs and whether they required aids and adaptation to the built environment: the responses majored on the requirement for showers and the lengthy wait for assessment and fitting. Some participants had paid for installation of a shower themselves. Others mentioned the requirement for grab rails and storage that was accessible

- When asked if they considered their accommodation would be suitable for them in the future some participants again mentioned the requirement for aids and adaptations. While one group related the question to other older people and their requirements rather than themselves
- Participants were asked if they could change one thing about the service their landlord provided, what would it be? The responses ranged from no changes required to a perception that the landlord was letting properties to residents who were too frail for sheltered housing
- Residents were then asked whether their landlord asked them about the service they received now or might want in the future
  - A number of residents mentioned that their landlords seemed to send them surveys on a regular basis but complained that there was little feedback
  - Some participants felt that undertaking surveys was not an appropriate way of consulting with older people
  - Face to face meetings were seen by many as the most appropriate method of consultation
  - Focus groups seemed to be enjoyed by those who participated in the two groups where staff were not present

When asked if they thought they could really influence the service offered by their landlord the clear view of the participants was that they could not

### **2.2.1 Summary of key findings – questions to residents of non - sheltered housing?**

**2.2.2** Participants were asked what services for older people were provided by organisations in Cambridgeshire. A large number of services were mentioned but not all participants seemed to know about all of the services nor were all the services available Countywide. Some of the services mentioned were:

- Day care services
- Care services
- District nurses
- Luncheon clubs
- Subsidised travel – dial a ride
- Subsidised public transport
- Aids and adaptations
- Falls clinic
- Support groups for carers
- Handymen / gardening services
- Voluntary car services
- Occupational Therapist services
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- Some participants raised concerns about the quality of some services including:
  - Transport problems making attendance at Day Care Centres difficult
  - The fact that care staff were not valued, paid well or offered a career structure which resulted in a high turnover rate of staff
  - Many challenges faced were due to the rural nature of the County
- When participants were asked if they considered that there were any other services that should/could be offered to older people in the County responses included:
  - Preventative services such as housework, gardening
  - Return of the old home help service
  - Chiropody
  - Visiting optician
  - More help to use computers (but someone pointed out that libraries can do this)
- One group suggested that older people could provide home help services for other more frail older people
- There was a view that volunteer services should be further promoted within the County
- When asked. if in addition to the services already mentioned, participants considered that there were any groups of older people who needed special services or support. Responses included:
  - Those people with loss of mobility
  - People with dementia and their carers – a thirteen week assessment delay is far too long
  - People with other forms of mental illness
  - Vulnerable people living alone
  - Those with communication problems and sensory impairments
  - The growing number of single older people – the growth in divorce was cited as a reason for this
- Participants were asked if they subscribed to a dispersed alarm service. Across the groups only three subscribed. One person mentioned that they had applied to have this service but was unable to as they were not able to come up with two key holders. Someone suggested the church as a key holder and another felt that a key safe was the solution. Of note key safes are already provided by one provider in the County
  - Two participants had used the service, one in error and another in an emergency and both were satisfied with the service provided
  - When asked if the service was good value for money one participant stated that they were reconsidering their position as the service cost was £50 per quarter

- Some participants reflected that they were content to know that there were such services available if they needed them in the future
- When asked if they felt the alarm service could be extended to offer the other services, e.g. passive monitoring, responses varied:
  - One group were generally in favour as they felt that these services could have a preventative affect. They put forward the view that they were in favour of sensors but not the use of cameras
  - The other group were concerned about intrusiveness. One participant with interests in services for those with dementia said that relatives of those with dementia had reservations about the intrusiveness of this option
- When asked if their current accommodation suited their needs and whether they required aids and adaptation to the built environment. The key responses of one group included:
  - Considerable resentment about delays in OT assessments and the suggestion that preliminary phone assessment and details are sought to speed things up, as with the blue badge system
  - Similar resentment about 2 year wait for equipment following OT assessment
  - Delight in the benefits of equipment when it arrives, e.g. a handrail up the stairs
  - The other group stated that their accommodation met their needs
- When asked if they considered their accommodation would be suitable for them in the future some participants again mentioned aids and adaptations, including walk-in showers. One person had paid privately for a bath lift and was delighted in having her first baths in 4 years
- When asked if they had ever considered moving into sheltered housing one group felt that it was not an option they would consider. In the other group, mainly consisting of professionals with some experience in the sector had considered it. Some felt passionately that older people ought to plan for their futures better than they do, considering what their lives would be like if their partner died or they became frail – i.e. considering housing and social contact options and availability. One person felt that older people need a passion to keep them going....
- When asked if they owned their own home how important would it be to them to do so if they moved. Participants in both groups responded that they would want to continue to own their own homes Members of one group stressed that homes should be designed to meet the need of older people
- Participants were asked what they felt about residential homes. Responses included the following:

- One person who had been a lay assessor of care homes said that the most important thing was to have chosen themselves to go into a home and to have chosen that particular home. If those things didn't apply then the person was unlikely to be happy
- One person said she'd want to avoid residential homes at all costs but when challenged re using "we all", not everyone agreed with her
- Everyone agreed that being in charge of ones own destiny was the key
- One person stated that she visited people in residential homes and often found them to be depressed. Reasons given for this was isolation and high windows so there was no view of the world
- Participants were asked if they required care from others in the future, how would they like that to be provided? Responses included:
  - At home
  - Continuity of care by one person
- Participants were asked what they felt was most important in planning and building housing for older people and what the professionals need to get right. Responses included:
  - Automatic doors you can open
  - Low level windows you can see out of
  - Windows over sinks that you can open
  - More user friendly door entry systems
  - Windows facing action, not a static view, e.g. hedges that get in the way of seeing life
- Other comments recorded included:
  - Services must enable people to be as independent as possible, while someone has a watching brief, enabling older persons to be responsible for themselves as far as possible
  - People need options for company and activity
  - A request for feedback from the research
- We also analysed some research that had been undertaken with older people in Cambridgeshire. Many of the responses were similar to those offered by our respondents. However, a range of other comments were raised including:
  - Care packages designed to meet the aims of the individual not to suit 'the system'
  - Helpers who do what the person wants i.e. changing a light bulb – not what they think they want
  - Access to information on available services