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Introduction

EROSH exists to promote awareness of the benefits of good quality sheltered housing and partnership working between housing providers, their staff, other agencies, including health providers and social care, and most importantly residents.

As part of our drive for a modernised understanding and provision of sheltered housing and floating support services we are setting out ways the Government may support the evolution of older people's services to meet the growing needs of an ageing population.

Over one million people live in housing provided specifically for the needs of older people and nearly two thirds of these live in sheltered housing. Many of these schemes are managed by local authorities, housing associations and the private sector.

The number of people over pensionable age is expected to increase to 12.2 million in 2011, and will rise to more than 13.9 million by 2026, reaching over 15.3 million in 2031. By 2018 there will be 780,000 people aged 80 and over, which will grow to 2.3 million by 2028.

This ageing population will put unprecedented demands on public services, such as health and social care, which can be alleviated by maximising the use and potential of sheltered housing.

EROSH believes that there are untapped opportunities in sheltered housing that can benefit the whole community in both rural and urban areas. Sheltered housing can help local authorities, health providers and social care services to deliver their commitments to the well-being and personalisation agendas.

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“Sheltered housing is one of the nation’s greatest assets for meeting the needs of older people.”

Sheltered housing has always offered a range of different models of accommodation and support. These include:

1. **Resident wardens** - The most common way for many years has been a residential scheme manager/ warden but this model is being questioned by many as less efficient and inappropriate in meeting individuals’ needs through the support provided.
2. **Floating support** - Provided by support staff based in sheltered housing schemes to older and vulnerable people living in the community as well as those in sheltered housing schemes. ERoSH does not support large scale models that favour only floating support, as this does not capitalise on the potential of sheltered housing as a hub and resource to the wider community.
3. **Hub and spoke** - Promotes sheltered housing schemes as a resource or hub for the wider community as well as individual residents. Teams of staff based in selected schemes can deliver services to people living in sheltered housing and to those in the community.

Social, health, educational and other activities in the scheme can be developed and open to those in the wider community.

These models present opportunities to offer a menu of high, medium and low level services, with related charging.

This document sets out our priorities for the Government to consider to help ensure that older persons’ housing and support needs are met in the most effective way.

Our priorities

1. Gain recognition of how funding for sheltered housing saves money

“Sheltered housing is one of the nation’s greatest assets for meeting the needs of older people. It should be a crucial preventative service which should not be lost.” (More than just a few kind words, National Housing Federation, 2010)

Research shows that:

- Supporting People funding of £198.2 million for older people living in sheltered housing provides a net financial benefit of £646.9 million through reduced need for residential or nursing care, hospital administration and

home care (Cap Gemini for the Communities and Local Government 2009). This shows that funding sheltered housing helps relieve the cost of more expensive and resource-intensive public services.

- Support to people living in sheltered housing helps to promote health, well-being and social inclusion, and prevents anxiety, depression, falls, isolation and admissions to hospital and long-stay care.

There is a need to ensure funding is available to maintain the standard and quality of sheltered housing. If low-level preventative funding declines this will ultimately cost the Government and local authorities more.



2. Highlight the advantages and practice of 'homes for life' and support services

"The vast majority of older people choose to live in their own homes in the community well into later life." (Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A National Strategy for Housing an Ageing Population, CLG, 2008)

Sheltered housing can prolong independence and self-care by providing a range of low-level support services, and help people to access more intensive services as and when they need them.

'Homes for life' can be created by:

- **Personalising services** - Providers are moving away from the one-size fits all model and want to provide a menu of options to target support where it is needed. This increases value for money as staff capacity can be fully used where it is required.
- **Remodelling buildings** - To meet the needs of our ageing population adaptating existing structures is necessary. This includes:

- Conversion of difficult to let properties.
- Combining units to provide larger accommodation to meet the current needs of older people so residents have their own home but access to high levels of care.
- Providing self-contained homes in a communal building.
- Signposting guidance and funding for local authorities and housing associations to kick-start the remodelling process.

- **Clear allocations policies** - ERoSH recognises the tensions between traditional allocation criteria based on housing need and the Supporting People programme requirement that support worker funding is prioritised on those with support needs. Local authority housing departments need to work in partnership with Supporting People lead officers and local sheltered housing providers to develop allocations policies that address this tension and reconcile needs, choice, prevention and social inclusion.

3. Ensure partnership and coherent working between housing, care and support providers

Local authorities and housing providers work in partnership with other local services to ensure they are offering a menu of housing, care and support options to older people. But sometimes this can be patchy.

Where older people cannot return home from hospital because their own homes are unsuitable, sheltered housing providers can work with Primary Care Trusts to alleviate 'bed blocking'. Providers can offer them options such as sheltered housing and extra care, to allow them to return to live independently. Respite care is also offered in some extra care or assisted living schemes.

A case study, supported by the Department of Health, has identified that partners working together can save costs to health and social care:

- Willow Housing and Care invested £41,000 to provide support services to older people in hospital, which saved £420,000 per year in health and social care expenditure through reducing admissions to hospital and residential care.



By working closely with Supporting People commissioners the support service allowed older people to make choices about returning home or living in alternative accommodation such as sheltered housing or extra care. The service can arrange aids and adaptations, cleaning, moving their bed downstairs, a community alarm or homecare.

ERoSH recognises that housing providers and local authorities must be encouraged to work together to raise the profile of housing related support services and their contribution to meeting wider targets.

This can be achieved by:

- Social services ensuring that they and their key partners' housing strategies have a direct commitment to providing and maximising the potential of sheltered housing.
- Commissioning bodies, housing and support providers working closely to ensure that a range of options are provided to greatly increase value for money and effective delivery of services.

- Using sheltered housing as a community hub to bring together the various arms of support for residents and other local older residents in the wider community.

4. Savings by prevention rather than cure - secure Supporting People allocation for older people

The preventative services delivered by Supporting People can help tackle the needs of our ageing society and of managing wider local authority pressures such as social care costs.

In 2009 Cap Gemini research showed that there are 450,091 household units of older people in sheltered housing receiving Supporting People services. Based on the Supporting People package the total cost per annum to this client group is estimated to be £6.4 billion but if Supporting People was to be removed the cost to other services (social services, hospital administration and other services) would increase to £7 billion.

We want to ensure that the financial and other benefits of sheltered housing are not lost with the end of ring-fencing.

This can be achieved by:

- Local authorities showing how Supporting People funding is allocated to ensure it is spent on the housing and support needs of older people as well as other groups.
- Providing a longer term funding structure which would allow service providers to have more security in their contracts. This also encourages joint working between providers so they can share overhead costs and dedicate more resources to direct support services.

Conclusion - What can we do to help?

- ERoSH can advise the Government on the future direction of sheltered housing and older people's support services and how they can be maximised to meet personalisation and well-being agendas.
- We can provide best practice case studies to demonstrate how sheltered housing models are evolving.
- Together our members provide a voice for sheltered and retirement housing to represent the needs of our ageing population.

For more information on this document and ERoSH please contact the chair of ERoSH Jo McTavish at jomctavish@aol.com or ERoSH's director of policy Imogen Parry at imogen.parry@btopenworld.com, or call 01249 654249 or visit www.shelteredhousing.org