

Sheltered housing has changed

Nine Key Questions and Answers



All you need to know about Sheltered and Retirement Housing

There are various types of services available for older people depending on your needs including:

- Home support
- Community alarm (with access to emergency response services)
- Telecare
- Sheltered housing
- Extra care housing
- Residential and nursing care accommodation

See the end of this leaflet, Q9, for information on organisations that can give advice about these services. This leaflet explains what sheltered/retirement housing is and how you might benefit from it.

Q1 What is sheltered housing?

It is specially designed accommodation, available for rent or for sale, mainly for older people. It is sometimes called retirement housing. Some sheltered schemes are called 'extra care sheltered housing'/'very sheltered housing'/'assisted living' or housing for older people. These provide additional support services, sometimes including care from a care team located on-site.

Q2 What are the benefits of living in sheltered/retirement housing?

Joan in Winton, Salford

"I decided to move into sheltered housing when I realised that I needed support but still wanted to remain independent. It was difficult making the move leaving behind where I had lived, neighbours and memories, but I soon settled in and made new friends through the scheme activities. I had been living in sheltered housing for many years when we were told that a new tenant was moving into the scheme. When the new tenant (Bob) moved in, I realised that there was something very familiar about him and it kept playing on my mind. Eventually, I realised that my new neighbour was in fact my old neighbour of 60 years ago! Bob's wife (who had sadly passed away) had been my best friend back then, and I regularly used to baby sit for their son. Bob and I are good neighbours and friends once more, able to chat about happy memories of the past!"

Story: Housing Connections Partnership



Neighbours, Joan and Bob

- Good quality housing
- Communal facilities and on site services.
- A home for life wherever possible
- Your own front door
- Independence and choice
- Peace of mind through 24 hour emergency assistance
- Security and safety
- Support designed for your individual needs
- Company when wanted
- Remaining part of a community
- Choice of landlord/provider
- Maintenance and repairs taken care of

Q3 What does it provide?

There are lots of variations between sheltered housing schemes. However, they usually provide many of the following features:

- Self-contained flats with their own bathrooms and fitted kitchens
- Communal facilities such as:
 - laundry
 - communal lounge for a variety of social activities
 - gardens
 - guest room
- Security and safety features
- A scheme manager or designated support staff
- 24-hour emergency assistance through connection of each flat to a call centre.

Many sheltered housing providers also aim to provide a 'home for life' – ask them.

Q4 What does the service provide?

Again, this varies according to the nature of the scheme and the needs of the residents. The service will provide staff to:

- Help you to settle in and explain how everything works.
- Make regular contact with you.
- Together with you, assess your needs and agree a support plan to help you maintain independence.
- In consultation with you, liaise with families, statutory, voluntary and private agencies to ensure these needs are met. Encourage you to join in and benefit from social activities.
- Report and monitor repairs and maintenance work.
- Co-ordinate and give advice on services such as shopping, cleaning, cooking, personal and nursing care. Although they rarely directly provide such services, they can take on an advocacy and liaison role, to help you access these services.
- Provide assistance and support in maintaining your tenancy and directing you to other services.
- Encourage you to access services in your community.

Q5 Who is eligible for sheltered housing?

- Different providers and landlords set different criteria but some state that you should be over 60 (or often 55 in leasehold schemes). People living alone or in couples are eligible.
- Many older people can now move into and remain in sheltered housing, because the buildings are specially designed for the easy delivery of health, care and support services. Your particular requirements will usually be discussed with you before you move in to ensure that services are in place prior to your arrival.
- Most sheltered housing providers do not provide care but may be able to assist prospective residents to access it. Most Local Authority and Housing Association providers operate a Choice Based Lettings system where you can bid for accommodation.

Q6 How much does it cost?

- If you rent, you will pay a weekly rent plus a service charge and a support charge.
- If you buy, you will pay a service charge and a support charge.
- The service charge in both rented and owner occupied schemes includes the costs of cleaning, gardening and the furnishing and maintenance of common/communal areas.
- You may be entitled to assistance with the rent from Housing Benefit and you will be advised about this on application.
- You may also be able to receive help in paying the support charge from the local Supporting People team. Support staff will be able to advise you on this.

Q7 What should I look for in a sheltered housing scheme?

Be clear about what you want and decide which of the following factors are important to you:

- Location – ease of access to shops, transport and surgeries
- Design – suitable for special needs (wheelchair, visual impairment etc)
- Communal facilities (are they what you want?)
- Size and layout of flat (does it meet your needs?)
- Atmosphere
- Support designed for your individual needs
- Service provider (are they welcoming, informative?)
- Cost
- Other residents (what do they say about living there?)
- Do the services and location meet your cultural, language and religious needs?
- Does the service provider involve you in decisions which affect you?

Mrs A. was living in a small private rented property. She was isolated and being pressured by the landlord with nowhere to store a wheelchair. The caseworker visited and discussed options leading to an application for a sheltered property. She was taken to view the property and was keen to move. The housing options service then assisted with the move, ensuring she received the correct benefits including a successful claim for Attendance Allowance. She is now settled in a comfortable, secure one bedroom flat with charging space for a wheelchair, company and adequate care provided.

Source: Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods - A National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society, DH, DWP, CLG February 2008.

Q8 What support is available and what say will I have about the type of service and how it will be provided?

- The level and nature of the support will vary according to your needs, the scheme and the local area, and you should speak to the service provider to find out exactly what support can be given.
- The landlord, support provider and local authority Supporting People team may each periodically contact residents to enquire about the quality of the service, value for money and how the service is delivered.
- You have a right to be involved in decisions about the service you receive.
- If you have specific cultural or other needs, make sure the support offered can respond to them.

Q9 How do I find out more about how to access sheltered/retirement housing and whether I am eligible?

Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) provides detailed information about 25,000 housing schemes and about 12,500 care homes for older people throughout the UK. The EAC works in partnership with FirstStop Advice for older People.

Elderly Accommodation Council

T: 020 7820 1343; E: enquiries@eac.org.uk; W: www.HousingCare.org

FirstStop Advice

T: 0800 377 7070; E: info@firststopadvice.org.uk; W: www.firststopadvice.org.uk

Age UK Advice provides a service to older people, family, friends and carers. We have a team of expert advisers who will give you information that is accurate and up-to-date. Part of the service specialises in providing information, advice and a dispute resolution provision, for people living or working in sheltered and private retirement housing. If we can't help, we will point you in the right direction.

For more information contact (freephone) 0800 169 65 65 or visit use online at: www.ageuk.org.uk

ERoSH, the national consortium for sheltered housing and producer of this leaflet. Contact: 01249 654249 email: info@shelteredhousing.org www.shelteredhousing.org

Or you can go direct to your local council or social/private accommodation provider.

ERoSH has five different leaflets available for:

- Hospital and primary care staff
- Social services
- Sheltered and retirement housing providers
- 9 Key Questions and Answers about sheltered and retirement housing in different languages - general enquiries, older people, friends and relatives
- Domiciliary care - a good practice guide for sheltered and retirement housing staff.