

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Community Select Committee

18 May 2022

TITLE:	Review of Age Designation Accommodation & Older Persons Services Report
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR	Cllr Fiona Sloman – Executive Councillor for Housing & Licensing
CONTACT OFFICERS:	Helen Core – Head of Housing Services David Smith – Head of Communities and Climate Change
WARDS INVOLVED:	All

Appendix A – Carelink Charging Policy

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 This report seeks to review the number of properties designated for the over 55s, with a view to increasing the volume of general needs accommodation available for single/couple households whilst still protecting the income stream for the Carelink Service.
- 1.2 The report further outlines the wider services available to support older people in our Communities.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that the contents of this report are noted and that the proposed changes are implemented:
 - To redesignate suitable identified properties for those under 55
 - To rebrand the sheltered stock as “Retirement Living”
 - To pilot a “Try Before you Buy” Initiative within the sheltered stock
 - To formally agree the Carelink charging policy (appendix A)

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 The volume of properties designated for the over 55s is disproportionate to demand and needs to be addressed.
- 3.2 These properties will become de-designated on the next occasion they void in order to prevent a cliff-edge drop of income for Carelink.

- 3.4 Demand for general needs accommodation is extremely high at present, with turnover in family accommodation being particularly low. Increasing demand for sheltered accommodation thus freeing up larger properties will assist in aiding this.
- 3.5 Ensuring the approach towards Carelink charging in the remaining designated units is clear and transparent before a tenancy is entered into..
- 3.4 The Council helps to provide support for older people through its Community Support Grants Scheme. This includes the provision of social group activities, befriending services, advice and practical support.
- 4. How this Report Links to Corporate Priorities**
- 4.1 As part of the Corporate Plan aim ‘Supporting our communities to create a healthier, safer, cleaner High Peak’.

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Web Links and Background Papers

n/a

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5. Background and Detail

- 5.1 There are 1,142 one-bedroomed properties within the Council’s ownership of which 860 are designated for over 55s. This equates to 75% designated for over 55s and 25% for those under 55.
- 5.2 There are 571 households on the housing register requiring one-bedroomed properties. Of these, 217 are over 55 (38%).
- 5.3 As outlined above, there is an imbalance between the supply and demand of properties for over 55s.
- 5.4 This can cause issues if tenants accept a property and then do not want the Carelink service; especially as, historically, clients have been allowed to “opt out”. Currently, 373 properties do not have any charge on the property. A revised Carelink charging policy is attached at appendix A.
- 5.5 The current “Cost of living” crisis is leading more and more tenants to attempt to opt-out of the service. This causes particular issues in properties that have a hardwired alarm or are part of a dispersed scheme. Redesignating a proportion of the stock will help to alleviate this issue.

6. Proposal for Redesignation of General Needs Age Restricted Accommodation

- 6.1 It is proposed to redesignate 281 properties over time – at the point they next become vacant.
- 6.2 In financial terms, this would be a reduction of £67k per annum (£1,389.12 x 48) of Carelink income should all properties become vacant within one financial year. This is highly unlikely to occur as the typical attrition rate is nearer 5-10%, giving a gradual reduction in income of up to £7k per annum.
- 6.3 It is considered that this gradual reduction in income can be offset by increasing the current Carelink client base. An intensive marketing campaign is scheduled for September 2022 in order to promote the service. This is timetabled to allow current staff vacancies to be recruited to to ensure increased demand for the service is being met.
- 6.4 Even without growing the current client base, the service generated a gross surplus of c.£100k in the financial year 2020/21, increasing to c.£115k in 2021/22, which fully accommodates the costs involved in this proposal.
- 6.3 This redesignation would reduce the designation of properties for over 55s to 579, closer to a 50% / 50% balance.

7.0 Increasing demand for sheltered stock

- 7.1 In addition, there is a need to increase demand for sheltered accommodation within the Borough.
- 7.2 There is a stigma attached to “sheltered” accommodation with historic negative connotations.
- 7.3 It is proposed that sheltered schemes will be referred to as “Retirement Living Complexes” and the current Sheltered Housing Officers rebranded to “Retirement Living Officer”. There are no financial implications to this as it is only a change in job title and all employment terms and conditions remain the same.
- 7.4 Following discussions with Health colleagues, it has been suggested that some clients who would benefit from sheltered accommodation are reticent in taking a tenancy; especially those who have always lived in a property they own themselves or have been resident in their home for a number of years. It is therefore proposed to implement a “Try Before you Buy” initiative allowing potential tenants the opportunity to stay in a sheltered flat for 1-2 weeks to experience for themselves what it is like.
- 7.5 To this end, an additional Temporary Accommodation unit has been developed within Hartington Gardens. In addition to enabling short term stays as outlined above, this also serves as a “Show Flat” and provides a further

temporary accommodation unit for homeless presentations in this vulnerable client group.

8. Older Persons Services Outside the HRA

8.1 The Borough Council helps to provide support for older people through its Community Supports Grant. This funding helps to support the delivery of core services by Citizens Advice, The Samaritans, High Peak Community and Voluntary Service, Connex Community Support, The Bureau, New Mills Volunteer Centre, Glossopdale Furniture Project and Jericho Café.

8.2 The table below provides examples of some of the services that are offered across High Peak.

Service	Provider
Delivery of the social connectedness project Bereavement and loss support groups Social prescribing (excluding Glossopdale)	High Peak Community and Voluntary Service
Community Navigation (NHS funded workers supporting people to meet goals and link into activities, support and services). Call Companions (telephone befriending service for socially isolated or sight impaired people). Sight loss support. Peer support group for anyone caring for those living with dementia Befriending and mentoring sessions. Social groups (informal check in and chat groups facilitated by the Community Navigation team).	The Bureau
Transport to medical appointments (car scheme involving volunteer drivers transporting those unable to use public transport). Chair-based exercise classes. Minibus transport IT support (enabling people to access Zoom and similar platforms). Prescription delivery service.	New Mills Volunteer Centre

Service	Provider
<p>Help with garden maintenance, small gardening jobs, general tidy ups.</p> <p>Friday lunch club.</p> <p>DIY - home safety and security support to older and vulnerable people.</p> <p>Befriending service</p> <p>Shopping service.</p> <p>Group Support - provision of dementia friendly, stroke support, handicraft social groups.</p>	
<p>Home from Hospital service</p> <p>Social Group activities (coffee clubs, 'Meet & Eat' group, art group etc for older and vulnerable people).</p> <p>Hearing Aid battery distribution (collection point for hearing aid batteries for patients registered at the audiology clinic at Chesterfield Royal Hospital).</p> <p>'Alive & Kickin' project to encourage and support social and physical activities for older and vulnerable people</p> <p>Befriending</p> <p>Handy Van service (delivery of the DCC Handy Van service across the High Peak (and the whole of north Derbyshire). The service provides free home safety and security support to older and vulnerable people, and installs telecare equipment to enable people to continue to live safely and independently).</p> <p>Care & Support services</p>	<p>Connex Community Support</p>