

Scrutiny Report 2023

Area of Inspection: Independent Living Services 2023

Scope and Approach

Background

From Mid-July 2022 to January 2023 the Scrutiny Panel undertook a deep dive review into the Independent Living Services recent restructure consulting with wider customers to gain current satisfaction levels with a view to:

Review & inspect with the Head of Customer and Housing Services the Independent Living Services:

To understand how this is working for customers Scrutiny looked at:

- 1) What are customers getting?
 - 2) What sites?
 - 3) What is being charged for? (Grounds maintenance, heating, laundry etc)
- Support Charges (this work has been extracted from this review into a standalone future Scrutiny review)
 - Cost of service Independent Living, Cost of ILS charges to customers and fairness for customers (this work has been extracted from this review into a standalone future Scrutiny review)
 - Review Independent Living Services charges and SHMS charges with a view to what they may look like in the future? (this work has been extracted from this review into a standalone future Scrutiny review)
 - Review the value for money within the Taunton Dean 24/24 Service (this work has been extracted from this review into a standalone future Scrutiny review)
 - Survey: to be a mix of value for money and satisfaction with service (co-designed by customers)
 - National Housing Federation 'Every decision about care should be a decision about housing' report.

The outcomes of the review are measured in three categories: Start, Continue and Stop:

- **Start** – things which the Scrutiny panel identified they felt would be well received by customers
- **Continue** – things which the Scrutiny panel identified were of value
- **Stop** – things which the Scrutiny panel felt were adding little value to the customer

Process

Step one: The Scrutiny Panel commissioned a survey across all customers paying Service Charges and/or for Sheltered Housing Management Services

- Customers co-designed the survey alongside Head of Customer and Housing Services, 131 surveys were mailed out
- Scrutiny reviewed the first survey results within the 22 returned.
- A presentation TSM's and the impact on Scrutiny surveys presented to the panel November 2022
- Scrutiny co-designed themed coffee mornings within the common rooms of sheltered sites to consult with residents.

Step two: Scrutiny Panel looked at sector examples and papers:

- Sheltered Housing Star Survey 2019 Stroud City Council
- The Bristol Older Peoples Forum Housing Survey Report
- National Housing Federation Supported Housing and older peoples housing and development
- South Gloucestershire Over 55's housing Needs Survey 2018
- Northern Housing Consortium Sheltered housing and stock fit for purpose
- Argyll Community Housing association, Sheltered Housing Annual survey results 2020
- Cambridge City Council Star 2020; Independent Living Tenants

Step three: The panel reviewed the demographics of the 508 Independent Living Homes.

- Age demographic breakdown across all 508 properties noting that there was a large % of much older residents (58% over 70), **(see appendix 1)**
- Locations across North Devon of the ILS homes noting 31% of these homes were in quite isolated rural locations **(this data will feed into future reviews)**
- Property types and bedroom sizes **(this data will feed into future reviews)**

Step four: The panel began reviewing and inspecting the Sheltered Housing Management Service (SHMS) charges and Service Charges. Due to the complexity of these subjects the work they undertook has been parked to be picked up in separate Scrutiny Reviews and/or part of the development of a handbook.

Step five: The Panel reviewed the survey results from the initial 131 surveys delivered and the 22 returned which was felt to be too small a sample in providing meaningful data.

The Panel reviewed data collected from co-designed themed coffee mornings around the newly restructured Independent Living Service gathering opinions on how this is working from a customer's point of view.

The Panel worked together with the Independent Living Services Team Leader who delivered the themed coffee mornings and produced the Independent Living proposal based on feedback. The Panel will continue to work with the Team Leader to action recommendations in this report.

Key Findings and Recommendations in brief:

- 1) **Start** – Displaying timetables of staff available/on duty with alternative numbers to call when they are not on duty
- 2) **Start** – Designing a tailored handbook specifically for customers living in Sheltered Schemes.
- 3) **Stop – Pause the** review of SHMS, Service Charges and Taunton Dean 24/24 Service inspection as part of this ILS review and undertake separate Scrutiny service inspections at a later date.
- 4) **Start** – writing to customers to explain the change in the ILS team.

Table of key findings more detail
<u>Overview</u>

This review has taken some time to complete:

- a) Xmas and New year fell into the review period &
 - b) Scrutiny had to pause the review to collect wider customer points of view due to being unable to send out more surveys,
- all of which impacted on the scope and delivery of our review.

The original scope proved to be too broad for one review, the Taunton Dean Service, SHMN's charges, service charges and the impact of digital conversions for home alarms we recommended taking into separate future reviews.

The panel took time to co-design other activities to collect wider points of view via themed coffee mornings. This enabled us to collect a further 43 customer points of view on top of the 22 from a limited small mail-out survey.

The panel wish to note this was disappointing given the success of 2 previous Scrutiny mail out surveys, however as explained within this report we have agreed to pause these activities.

Recommendation 1 –

Display timetables in all of the sheltered sites for customers to see who is on duty which should be;

- a) Displayed on all notice boards in the different blocks and entrances.
- b) Be on each of the office doors
- c) Have useful contact numbers when staff are not on site.

The Panel recommends that all the rurally located sheltered home customers are written a letter sent to them to refresh who they can contact and who their independent living officer is.

The Panel recommends the following information should be contained in these letters;

- 1) Customer Care Team number
- 2) Money Matters staff names and telephone numbers
- 3) Energy Advice Officer name & Telephone numbers
- 4) Explanation of the ILS service customers can pay for if they need more support.
- 5) Information on the Specialist Service

Recommendation 2 –

The Panel felt there had been a lot of learning through their consultation activities that have been central to their support on the development of a

handbook.

The Panel feel this handbook for sheltered complexes should cover and/or involve:

- 1) What residents can expect as a bare minimum from staff available on-site and pledges on how the service will be delivered and monitored with clarification on staff roles and accessibility.
- 2) How to access services available through the Customer Care Team.
- 3) Using the handbook development as an opportunity to consult and co-design with residents' information residents, need to know about where they live on an individual location basis.
- 4) Set out how the service has changed at a local level supported by services based at head office.
- 5) Provide opportunity to change the language and tone on how NDH present the information contained in the handbook and corresponding signage and communications to take away confusion for example: Customers would prefer that the schemes are referred to as "housing complexes" or "residential housing" not sheltered schemes in the new handbook.
- 6) What residents are being charged for with SHMS and Service Charges
- 7) Sections that cover usage of laundry facilities, open spaces, and common rooms to promote mutual co-operation amongst residents.
- 8) Encourage residents to attend periodic coffee mornings to chat to staff and service managers and report back to customers "you said we have done".
- 9) Opportunity to promote the weekly paid Support Scheme as an insurance for times when residents need help that involves much more, explain and/or market the service as a safety net not just a phone call each week.

Recommendation 3 –

The Panel have commission that the Fresh Ideas Customer Group work together with the Independent Living Services Team Leader and co-design the following:-

- 1) Letter to be sent out to all sheltered housing residents
- 2) Notices/timetable information to be shared on sites

- 3) Content of handbook working with customers on site at themed coffee mornings
- 4) Ensure that all documentation is inclusive to all customer groups and consider using audio, icons and pictures

Appendix 1

Independent Living Homes

