

Allocation Policy EIA

Appendix Independent Living Schemes in Central Bedfordshire

Human Rights

The UN Principles for Older Persons includes:

- Older persons should be able to live in environments that are safe and adaptable
- Consideration of personal preferences and changing capacities

National Research

Key issues for older and disabled people include:

- Older people can live in some of the worst housing in the country, often inappropriate to their changing needs
- There is a serious shortage of accessible housing for disabled people, leading to a lack of choice and inappropriate housing
- Health and well-being is critical for this age group, to prevent or delay deterioration into ill-health and social isolation. Social isolation can lead to deterioration in health
- 180,000 people over 65 report having gone for a whole week without speaking to friends, neighbours or family.
- Around 25% of people over 65 years living in the community have symptoms of depression which warrant intervention.

Local Consultation - Sheltered Housing Standard 2013

Further consideration should be given to matching / placing tenants in schemes where the profile and circumstances of existing tenants more closely mirrors their own.

Local Consultation Allocations - Policy Independent Living 2015

Consultation forms were sent to the following:-

- 774 Who are on the Expression of Interest Register?
- Members of Older Peoples Reference Group (O.P.R.G.)
- Members of Sheltered Tenants Action Group (S.T.A.G.)
- Members of Way Forward Panel

The majority of the 244 respondents agreed with Independent Living Allocation Scheme proposal.

Respondents agreed with the minimum assessed care needs, but felt it is important to have flexibility to allow for changing care needs.

Respondents also agree with the initial occupancy of first sales and first letting. Some also felt that the criteria should remain the same for subsequent re-lets or re-sales.

There was an overall positive response to having a local connection to Central Bedfordshire and that a minimum of 5 years or more should be applied across the criteria, to offer consistency.

Although respondents agreed with the distance suggestion, they felt that there were too many schemes near Priory View. Respondents suggested an alternative criteria could also be how long a resident has lived in Central Bedfordshire, their care needs and also residents living in rural villages.

Conclusion

Consideration of national and local research and consultation findings highlights the following **Positive Equality Impacts**:

- Older / disabled people will be supported to move to better quality, more accessible housing
- Facilities will be highly responsive to changing care and support needs
- Ethos will enhance community spirit and interaction, reducing isolation and vulnerability
- Charter protects and promotes rights to independence, respect and being treated fairly
- Wider community benefits by opening up access to greater variety of local housing stock

Issues for Further Consideration

1) Assessment of Mental Health Needs

“There are socially isolated older people living in the community and some with mild to severe depression, These people would not meet the criteria to apply as they do not have any care input.”

It would be advisable to ensure that the assessment process for care needs, captures mental health needs as fully as physical disability care needs. Older people experiencing depression are likely to find the community spirit and interaction of developments such as Priory View helpful in combatting depression and as a result in also maintaining physical wellbeing. Depression in older people is often under diagnosed.

2) Older People Living in Rural Areas

The distance criteria may disadvantage older people living in rural areas and so it would be advisable to closely monitor this potential impact of the policy and to continue to develop options for older people living in rural areas.

3) Local Connection

Whilst consultees supported an approach which increased the length of residency criteria, such an approach would not be advisable in terms of sustaining equality of opportunity across different ethnic minority communities. It is therefore recommended that the length of residency criteria mirrors that of the main allocation policy.

Clare Harding

Corporate Policy Advisor (Equality & Diversity)