

## Programme News

Update from the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the University of Kent  
February 2005

### INSIDE...

This newsletter has information about our activities since last spring:

- Consulting stakeholders
- Research advisors
- The Extra Care Housing Fund

### BACKGROUND

Current government policy highlights the importance of providing housing, health and social care services which promote choice, quality and control for older people.

Relevant policy aims and concerns include:

- tackling the causes of ill health
- reducing poverty
- improving poor housing
- improving access to services
- providing good transport
- making sure people can choose where they live and where they receive care.

We are interested in how different types of housing and care can help to tackle these issues.

## CONSULTING STAKEHOLDERS

Our research concerns older people, and we want to make sure that we:

- reflect older people's views
- reflect their priorities and interests
- use methods that help older people to take part, if they want to.

We want to involve older people as research advisors. We would like to include people who are service users (that is, receiving health or social care services) and people who might become service users in the future. We are interested in the views of older people who are living at home, in extra care housing, sheltered housing, retirement communities, and in care homes.

### Who have we spoken to so far?

The research team met with older people living in three local housing schemes providing extra/enhanced care in April–May 2004. The housing schemes included council-run properties and a privately-managed village, with properties for sale or rent. We also met with a local user involvement and empowerment group of older people with mental health needs. They were living in various different forms of housing and receiving different levels of social care support.

We have also spoken to local authorities, housing and care providers (housing associations and private providers), government agencies and organisations such as Age Concern, to find out what they think needs to be researched.

Issues they identified as important include:

- What would help older people adapt when they move to specialised housing?
- How can new housing be designed so that it meets the needs of older people in twenty or thirty years' time?
- Which aspects of housing with care schemes are most important to older people's health and well-being?

## RESEARCH ADVISORS

We invited the groups of older people we met to act as research advisors, and explained that we wanted to meet occasionally to discuss their views on housing and care issues.

In these first meetings we also started to discuss people's experiences of housing. We spoke about what moving is like in later life, what influences older people's decisions to change their living arrangements, and the facilities and services they value.

In future we may ask advisors for their views about particular research projects we are carrying out, such as our evaluation of the Extra Care Housing Initiative.

### Issues raised by the research advisors

#### ■ Information and advice

Services may be under-used, and housing options missed because people do not know enough about what is available.

#### ■ Diversity

Older people are not all the same; they have different preferences and needs.

#### ■ Location

Local amenities and feeling safe where one lives are highly valued.

#### ■ Transport

It is important that people can access local shops and services.

#### ■ Building design

Buildings need to be suitable for wheelchair users and people with other equipment such as hearing aids.

#### ■ Space

Older people may want a spare room so guests can stay.

#### ■ Balance

Opportunities for community involvement and activities need to be balanced with the need for privacy.

## **THE EXTRA CARE HOUSING FUND**

In July 2003 the government announced that it would spend £87 million to finance 1,500 new extra care housing places. £29 million was available in 2004–05 and another £58 million for 2005–06. A further £60 million was announced in July 2004 for additional investment in 2006–08. Eleven local authorities in England were awarded funding in 2004 to build new schemes.

### **What is extra care housing?**

Extra care housing is housing that offers flexible care, with 24-hour support from social care and health teams. The housing may be flats or bungalows, and may be rented or owned. Meals will be available, as well as domestic support, social care and, where necessary, nursing care.

### **What will the new schemes be like?**

Analysis of the proposals for 2004–05 shows that, overall, 915 new units/dwellings are planned. Some will be ‘village’ style developments. Most of the schemes aim to cater both for older people with no special care needs and for people who would otherwise need to live in a care home. Most will offer intermediate care services and have a day centre.

Councils have bid for shares of the funding available for 2005–06 and the successful proposals were announced this February.

### **How many extra care housing schemes are there?**

It is quite difficult to find out about the total number of extra care housing schemes in the country as a whole. We know that at present there is relatively little compared with sheltered housing and care homes. We plan to carry out a study to find out how much extra care housing is available.

The Housing and Care Research Programme team at the Personal Social Services Research Unit includes Ann Netten, Robin Darton, Ketta Williams and Ann-Marie Muncer. Much of the research is funded by the Department of Health. Views expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Department. We would welcome comments about this newsletter.

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