

Q: I'm happy with the present arrangements for support - why change?

A: We want to make sure that support is available for all older people who need it, not only for those who live in sheltered housing. At present in Barnet, less than three in every hundred older people are living in sheltered housing. Providing a borough-wide service for older people means that the current services for sheltered housing residents need to change.

Q: When will the new support service open?

A: The council expects the new service to open in April 2010. This leaves a reasonable time to plan the details of the new service and to ensure that residents are able to be comment on the new design.

Q: How much money will be available from the council for the new service?

A: The council believes that the new service can be delivered more efficiently than the current services, and that savings of up to £400,000 per year can be made. This means that there will be a minimum of £600,000 to spend on the new service, plus approximately £200,000 for the provision of alarm systems.

Q: What kind of support will the new service offer?

A: The service will offer housing related support, which helps people maintain their independence. Housing-related support helps people with difficulties they may have such as:

- help to apply or reapply for benefits
- help to access health or other services
- help to maintain personal safety or security in the home
- help to access adaptations or equipment
- help to access social or cultural activities.

The new service will offer several different ways of providing support. For example, support staff could:

- offer a central helpline to provide quick advice with one-off problems, and to receive referrals for support with more complicated needs;
- work individually with people who need support, using a personal support plan tailored to their particular needs;
- help organise social activities and events for everyone who wants to take part

Q Why isn't there any mention of providing care for the most vulnerable people who need more than the new service will offer?

A: Care is to help people who can't do things for themselves, like getting out of bed, washing, shopping, laundry and cooking. This care is arranged by Social Services after an assessment. Support is different, and is about giving that

extra bit of help and advice, or linking into the right services, to enable older people to do the ordinary things of life for themselves.

Q: Will there still be a warden or scheme manager where I'm living?

A: No, not in most cases. The new staff teams will be responsible for supporting residents who need the service but they won't be attached to schemes like the present warden service. The support staff will be responsible for people rather than places.

Q: Will I have to pay if I receive support from the new service?

A: The new support service will be provided free of charge. This means that residents who currently pay a support charge will no longer have to do so.

Q: Will the new support service be available to everyone in sheltered housing?

A: Yes, if you need support. Many people in sheltered housing will already have a support plan. These plans will be reviewed to make sure that all support needs have been identified and to agree what support is needed in the future. The council will work closely with residents and providers to make sure that the changeover to the new service runs smoothly.

Q: How often will the new service visit people – will it be daily, weekly or monthly?

A: This will depend on your needs. We will ensure that older people who need support will be individually consulted on a support plan which meets their needs. We will ensure that the new support workers agree with the resident on when to call and when to visit.

Q: How would I get in touch with the new service?

A: We will make sure that every resident has full information and contact details for the new service before it opens.

Q: Who will run the new support service?

A: The provider will be selected later this year when the details of the new service have been worked out. The council will hold a competition to choose the provider of the new service.

Q: Will the new service be available straightaway for people who aren't living in sheltered housing?

A: This is one of the details that the council has to decide. The service may be reserved for sheltered housing residents for an initial period after opening. This would allow the service to settle down, and to check whether any changes are needed before the service is opened fully to other older people.

Q: What will happen to the alarm system where I'm living?

A: The alarm system should continue to be available from your landlord. The council do not intend to make any changes to the funding provided at present for alarm systems. Therefore if you are currently receiving financial help towards the cost of your alarm, this will continue as long as you remain eligible.

Q: Who will respond if there is an emergency call on the alarm system?

A: Most sheltered housing is linked to Barnet's Lifeline Centre which is staffed round the clock every day of the year. The staff at the Lifeline Centre will identify the reason for the call and if necessary arrange for attendance by emergency ambulance or police services.

Some providers make their own arrangements for out-of-hours emergency alarm calls at present. It will be up to these providers to decide whether or not to continue or change their systems, for example by linking to the Lifeline Centre. As part of the move to the new service, the council will work with providers to help organise any changes needed.

Q: Who will be responsible for making sure the buildings are kept secure if there will no longer be wardens or scheme managers?

A: Arrangements for managing the building and dealing with repairs are part of your landlord's responsibilities. The costs of these kinds of service are normally met from the rents that residents pay, not the weekly charges for the support service.

The council will consult all providers about their plans to make sure that buildings are as safe and secure as possible and that residents are informed of any changes that providers intend to introduce.

Q: Who will deal with urgent problems with repairs or breakdowns if there won't be a warden where I'm living?

A: Like the previous question, this will be the responsibility of your landlord as at present. The council expects that each provider will need to review the arrangements for residents to report problems and make sure residents know who to call. Alarm systems should continue to be provided as they are at present.

Q: How will the council keep me up to date with plans for the new support service?

A: Before settling on a service design, the council is keen to get the views of residents and other older people who will use the new service. In the last

year, groups of service users have helped the council and providers plan new services and the council is keen to support a similar approach in planning this new support service.

One possibility is for residents to choose representatives to take part in detailed discussions of how the new service should operate and the changeover from the current services. Arrangements for commenting on the service design will be confirmed by your current support provider.

For more information

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