



Northumberland

County Council

Cabinet

Tuesday, 13 February 2024

Adult Social Care: Extra Care and Supported Living Strategy

Report of Councillor(s): Councillor Wendy Pattison, Cabinet Member for Caring for Adults

Responsible Officer(s): Neil Bradley, Executive Director for Adults, Ageing & Wellbeing

1. Link to Key Priorities of the Corporate Plan

This report is relevant to the following priorities in the Council Corporate Plan 2023/26:

- “Tackling Inequalities - All Adults living well, regardless of age, background, illness or disability”; and
- “Tackling Inequalities - Residents have the building blocks of a good life”

The strategy targets adults with social care and support needs including people with disabilities, mental health conditions, medical conditions and carers. It aims to improve access to affordable, high quality and warm housing.

2. Purpose of report

To present the updated Extra Care and Supported Living Strategy (2024)

3. Recommendations

Cabinet is recommended to:

- 3.1 Endorse the Extra Care and Supported Living Strategy as the overarching strategy that will provide the context, vision and aspirations for delivery of projects in Northumberland.
- 3.2 Support opportunities which are consistent with the strategy including those that involve the use of Council land or buildings and planning decisions.

- 3.3 Note that some schemes can be developed without Council funding, whilst others may require support including capital funding and/or the use of Council land. Where Council capital funding is required for the viability of schemes, detailed business cases will be prepared.
- 3.4 Request the Executive Director for Adults, Ageing and Wellbeing to prepare a future report on the capital requirements of this programme once a number of submissions have been analysed.

4. Forward plan date and reason for urgency if applicable

Information about this report was published in the Forward Plan on 22 December 2023.

5. Background

- 5.1 This strategy is an updated version of the original published in 2018 which set out the Council's aspirations to develop extra care accommodation and supported living services for vulnerable residents in Northumberland. The strategy is aligned to relevant Council strategies including the Corporate Plan, the Housing Strategy, the Local Plan adopted in March 2022, and the Market Position Statement which identifies and sets out how the Council wants the care and support market to develop. This strategy acknowledges that people with 'lived experience' of a particular condition are often best placed to advise on what support and services will make a positive difference to their lives. Historically we have been able to achieve this through consultations about accommodation with the County's Ageing Well Partnership and groups like the Learning Disability Partnership Board and its locality groups. We are keen to involve people who use or may in the future use, specialist accommodation and care services at the earliest stages of service design, development and evaluation.
- 5.2 Northumberland County Council launched its first strategy to encourage the development of extra care and independent supported living services in Northumberland and there has been progress made with some developments, particularly for independent supported living facilities. The Council already had a track record of supporting this type of service and has worked to develop less institutional services since the early 2000's. The development of extra care services has been slower than the Council would have hoped because of the impact of the covid 19 pandemic, increased construction costs and the reduced availability of the specialist workforce required for the construction of extra care facilities. There are encouraging signs that this is now progressing including the recent planning approval for the development of an extra care facility in Morpeth.
- 5.3 The Council recognises that it may have to facilitate the development of new services, particularly where there is a financial shortfall which may require capital investment to enable the development to proceed. In other scenarios there may be difficulties in identifying appropriate land on which to develop services and it may be appropriate for Council owned land to be used to develop services and the strategy recognises the facilitating role that the Council has. The Council will consider the opportunity to develop and manage extra care and supported living through its own housing services and Advance before going out to the market, particularly on sites already owned by the Council or Advance.

- 5.4 The strategy proposes no single model for accommodation, either for older people or for other adults with support needs. Extra care is a concept that brings together high-quality accommodation, the right level of care at the right time for people who have their own front door. For older people, “extra care” schemes, with care staff available at all times is the preferred model, but consideration will be given on an individual basis to the location and needs of each local community where developments are planned. The strategy recommends that care services will, in most cases, be commissioned separately from accommodation, so that the Council can respond flexibly as the needs of people living in schemes change over time. Care services commissioned for independent living will be based on the needs of people living in the accommodation.
- 5.5 The strategy identifies the main towns and service centres in Northumberland as key locations to develop extra care services. It is anticipated that developments in these locations will complement existing services including traditional visit-based home care services which are more difficult to deliver in the rural parts of Northumberland. Extra care facilities that attract people from the more rural parts of Northumberland will make it easier to deliver home care services as it reduces the operational challenges in more rural areas, such as workforce, travel time and distances. In other parts of the County, opportunities to develop extra care accommodation will be explored when they arise, for instance as part of the Energising Blyth Project.

The need to develop accommodation

Accommodation for older people

- 5.6 Northumberland has an ageing population, and it is forecast that a third of the population (108,000) will be over the age of 65 by 2035. Not all older people will need support, but it is reasonable to assume that an increase in numbers will lead to more older people requiring support services, and housing and support solutions are needed to address this. The Council wants to increase the options available to older people in Northumberland who have care needs and increase the availability of extra care facilities as there are only three such schemes in the county.
- 5.7 While there are many sheltered housing schemes in Northumberland, the majority of these were developed three or four decades ago to standards which many older people no longer find satisfactory. The Council and other providers are currently reviewing their sheltered housing schemes and considering current demand and options for refurbishment. The strategy includes projections on population changes which will need to be revised over time as well as providing links to the various housing needs surveys that have been carried out in Northumberland.
- 5.8 There is a focus on ageing in society and its policy implications in the Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2023 which recommends actions to improve quality of life for older adults and prioritise areas with the fastest growth in older people. In his report Professor Chris Whitty raises his concern that the degree to which the population living in older age is concentrating geographically in England has not been recognised. The report describes that a significant proportion of people move out of cities and large towns before older age and into coastal, semi-rural or peripheral areas, where there are fewer services and transport links. Providing services and environments suitable for older adults in these areas is described as an “absolute priority” to maximise the period all older citizens have in independence. The report identifies that the provision of health and social care needs to be concentrated in these areas. Adults Services will be further considering the recommendations of the report in order to progress them with colleagues in other services such as Housing

and Planning. The report of the Director of Public Health in 2024 will also focus on ageing in society.

Accommodation for adults with care and support needs

- 5.9 Additional demand for accommodation with support is predicted from adults with social care needs and particularly adults with complex learning disabilities and/or autism. The strategy describes the need for additional accommodation and services for several groups including people transitioning from children to adult services, people living with ageing carers who are likely to require support in the future as well as people in existing services who could live more independently than they currently do.
- 5.10 The Council supports around 500 people with learning disabilities and mental health conditions in Independent Supported Living schemes which include both shared and individual self-contained accommodation. The strategy sets out plans to review some shared accommodation that appears to be no longer in demand and to encourage the market to focus on developing self-contained accommodation.

Key challenges that developments will help address

- 5.11 The adult social care sector is facing key challenges nationally and in Northumberland including a shortfall in the size of the workforce required to support the numbers of people who want to continue to live in their own homes. The size of the social care workforce and the geography of Northumberland mean that it is increasingly difficult to provide care and support to people living in dispersed rural communities. Extra care facilities will provide a single location to deliver social care services and reduce the amount of travel that care workers need to undertake and increase the amount of time they are available to deliver care. For this to work effectively developments must be attractive enough to encourage people who need support to move from more isolated areas into services. The needs of staff will be considered in the development of accommodation, and they will be attractive places in which to work as well as being attractive for the people who will live in them.
- 5.12 Extra care and supported living will be developed to modern standards and the design will aim to help people remain as independent as possible and reduce the need to draw on formal care and support services thereby helping to alleviate supply difficulties in social care. The Council and housing providers running services will encourage the involvement of local communities including the voluntary and community sectors to help people access preventative services and access informal support networks.

6. Options open to the Council and reasons for the recommendations

Housing for older people

- 6.1 The development of extra care schemes and other kinds of housing scheme specifically designed to provide attractive options which support older people to remain independent is not a statutory duty of the Council. The main source of capital funding for this objective that has currently been identified by the Council is the Disabled Facilities Capital Grant which the Council receives from the Government, which recent communications from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities have suggested is primarily intended to support local enhancements to the statutory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) scheme, which makes grants towards the costs of adaptations to people's existing housing. The conditions for this capital

grant do, however, permit its use to fund any adult social care capital expenditure and require decisions about its use to be agreed with the local NHS through the joint Better Care Fund plan.

- 6.2 It was reported to the Cabinet on 12 December that accumulated funding from this capital grant, which has not yet been allocated, will amount to approximately £8.5M by the end of this financial year. The Cabinet agreed to two specific changes to the Council's discretionary grant scheme for adaptations which will increase the costs charged to the capital grant, but deferred any decisions about broader changes to the discretionary grant scheme, to be made after a broader review of the options for changes to the DFG means test and considered alongside the case for continuing to set aside a significant proportion of this capital grant for other purposes including extra care and supported accommodation schemes. The primary alternative options available to the Council are therefore:
- a) Adopt the draft extra care strategy, noting that fulfilling its objectives is likely to require either the continuing availability of funding from the Disabled Facilities Capital Grant (DFG), whilst continuing to recognise that the that the money set aside for extra care and this programme does not affect mainstream DFG which would always be first call on the DFG grant allocation, or a separate new capital allocation by the Council;
 - b) Resolve that all or most of the funding from the Disabled Facilities Capital Grant should be used to support individuals to remain in their existing housing by expanding the financial support available to make adaptations;
 - c) Recommend to the Council a further allocation of capital funding to support a more ambitious programme of support for housing schemes which create attractive options for older people which support them to remain independent;
 - d) Seek to promote the development of new housing options for older people in main towns and service centres primarily through planning policies rather than by providing direct support for developments.
- 6.3 In the specific circumstances of Northumberland, the second of these options, while it has obvious attractions, would potentially mean investing in adaptations to housing of types, and in locations, where demographic changes may make it increasingly difficult to provide any care and support which people may subsequently need. It would also work against the objective of ensuring that older people have the option of making a positive choice to move to locations closer to community facilities and transport hubs. For these reasons, that option is not recommended, though the precise balance between funding adaptations and funding new housing options can be revisited over the coming year.
- 6.4 The Cabinet may wish to consider the third option in future, but given the current financial position of the Council, and the availability at present of a significant accumulated fund built up from the Capital Grant to provide any support required to enable new schemes to be developed in the immediate future, it is not recommended at present.
- 6.5 The Council's Local Plan adopted in March 2022 includes policies on housing for older people designed to encourage the development of extra care and supported housing schemes and other housing options in main towns and service centres. The option of further strengthening these policies could be considered when the Local Plan is next refreshed, and this could include more locationally specific guidance.

Other supported accommodation schemes

- 6.6 There are two alternative options for adults with a learning disability or autism or other specialist needs who require 24-hour support:
 - a) Care home accommodation
 - b) Shared Lives arrangements, in which people live with families who receive payments to meet the costs and recognise the care and support that they are providing.
- 6.7 Care home accommodation is now generally regarded as an unacceptably institutional option for most people in these categories, and the use of institutional settings is strongly discouraged by national policy. This alternative is therefore not recommended.
- 6.8 Shared Lives arrangements are a highly positive alternative for some people, and as part of the Council's BEST programme work is under way to expand the Council's existing Shared Lives scheme. However, it currently seems unlikely that Shared Lives will be a suitable option for all of the people who are currently being placed in independent supported living schemes, some of whom have care needs which could not reasonably be accommodated in the setting of an ordinary household. The Shared Lives scheme is therefore not at present expected to remove the need for independent supported living schemes, though it may reduce the rate at which the need for these schemes has been growing.

7. Implications

Policy	The strategy is designed to promote the local and national priority of enabling people to live as independently as possible and reducing the use of institutional accommodation. It is consistent with the Tackling Inequalities priority of the Corporate Plan.
Finance and value for money	Some extra care developments for older people will require public funding, which could be via Section 106, adult capital funding, or NHS England’s capital programme supporting Transforming Care. Where Council funding is required the appropriate approval process will be followed.
Legal	No immediate implications.
Procurement	Any procurement implications for schemes will be identified and considered individually for the course of detailed planning. Any development involving the use of Council land will be allocated via a formal tender.
Human resources	No direct implications for Council human resources.
Property	Opportunities linked to Council land holdings will be explored where relevant.

The Equalities Act: is a full impact assessment required and attached?	No - not required at this point Equality Act issues will be considered when assessing individual needs, where relevant.
Risk assessment	No risk assessment required.
Crime and disorder	No implications identified.
Customer considerations	The recommendations will improve the choice and availability of accommodation and services for adult social care service user groups.
Carbon reduction	No implications identified.
Health and wellbeing	Positive implications for health and wellbeing with improved accommodation and choices of services.
Wards	(All Wards);

8. Background papers

Chief Medical Officer's annual report 2023: Health in an ageing society (Department of Health and Social Care 10 November 2023) (Updated 16 November 2023) Available [here](#)

9. Links to other key reports already published

[Adaptations for Disabled People Cabinet 12 December 2023](#)

[Northumberland Local Plan \(March 2022\)](#) (paragraphs 7.63 to 7.71 and policy HOU 11)

10. Author and Contact Details

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