

Report to: Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel
Date: 21 July 2011
Report by: Nigel Baldwin
Presented by: Nigel Baldwin, Enabling Manager, Community Housing & Regeneration
Subject: Removal of resident wardens/ managers at Portsmouth Town Court and Friendship House

1. Purpose of the Report

The Health Overview & Scrutiny Panel met on 9 June and resolved that details of the removal of resident wardens/managers at the schemes stated above be brought to the next meeting

2. Recommendations

2.1 Both premises are owned and managed by independent organisations.
At Portsmouth Town Court the owner Southern Housing Group decided to remove the resident warden/manager.
At Friendship House the resident warden/scheme manager has not been removed

2.2 There are no specific recommendations for the HOSP to implement. Portsmouth City Council provides some financial support to assist with the provision of intensive housing management services. This funding changes regularly but the specific decision concerning the removal of resident wardens/managers is not an issue that Portsmouth City Council can determine.

3 Background

3.1 Portsmouth Town Court – 60 studio and 1 bed flats - was originally developed and owned by James Butcher Housing Association (JBHA). This organisation then merged with Southern Housing Group. Southern Housing Group own and manage approximately 25,000 homes (about 2.5% of which are in Portsmouth) across Southern England (operations only extend as far West as Hampshire and Wiltshire). They are a Registered Provider of affordable housing and a not-for-profit charitable organisation. Southern Housing Group made the decision to remove sheltered housing scheme managers nationally in late 2009.

A letter from Caroline Tiller, one of the Executive Directors of Southern Housing Group, dated 5.11.09 states that Southern Housing Group “remain committed to sheltered housing but will focus on our core strengths of housing management and maintenance”

3.2 The resident warden/scheme manager was employed to provide ‘intensive housing management services’ i.e. **not** to provide personal care to residents but to provide help to residents when required in order to assist them to lead

an independent life. For this service Southern Housing Group received some financial assistance from Portsmouth City Council, derived from the Supporting People grant.

3.3 The existing temporary scheme manager was withdrawn in April 2011, but those residents that relied on the support provided by the scheme manager were instead supported by Guinness Care & Support through their floating support service

3.4 Southern Housing Group has developed 'an internal specialist housing role that will bridge the gap between support provider and housing management'. This role has been developed particularly with sheltered scheme residents in mind who do not see a support provider. The title of the role is Resident Services Officer (Sheltered) and in Portsmouth a member of staff operates floating support between Portsmouth Town Court and the other Southern Housing Group property - Sydenham Court

3.5. Friendship House – approximately 34 flats - This property is owned and managed by the Guinness partnership and is sheltered housing originally for housing and supporting older members of the Chinese community

3.6 There is currently a scheme manager on site provided by Guinness, although in terms of the financial contribution provided by Portsmouth City Council to fund intensive housing management support, this service is currently subject to the tender process.

3.7A A decision is due in relation to the tender by end of August 2011. Depending on the award, this may result in a change of support staff designation from warden to floating support worker, but the existing staff member would be retained by whichever organisation was to win the tender due to current legal regulations. Those receiving support services would therefore have the same person delivering this service and it may be that the facilities at Friendship House (office space etc.) continue to be utilised in the same way by the successful support provider

3.8 A survey of residents has been carried out by the Council's Supporting People team. The survey reveals a high number of residents with a need for housing related support to be able to remain independently living in their own home. At Friendship House the assistance of friends or family and telecare is nearly as important as that from the scheme manager. The top 3 issues where residents need support are self assessed as being in claiming benefits; communication with family or friends; and keeping safe from harm. The tender process aims to target the reducing financial resources at those people that are assessed as being most vulnerable, rather than providing a 'blanket' approach to support. The new service will not be building specific but will assist residents in a number of different sheltered housing buildings and people in other home settings.

4. Impact on other Local Authority services

4.1 At both Portsmouth Town Court and Friendship House care has been taken to ensure that an intensive housing support service continues to be provided to those that need this service to live independently. Although a change to the service may be a little unsettling for some residents there should not be an impact on residential placements.

4.2 The approach which focuses intensive housing support on the most needy has been necessitated by reductions in the financial support available for these services, despite the fact that the provision of such services has been shown to reduce expenditure in other sectors such as Health and Social Care.

Nigel Baldwin
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