

REPORT TO: Health Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 29 November 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Health & Wellbeing

SUBJECT: Support to an Ageing Population:
Halton Housing

WARD (S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To update the board on Halton Housing's support for the needs of Halton's older customers by providing a range of housing options with appropriate levels of support to enable our customers to maintain and independent and healthy lifestyle within their own home.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

i) **This report be noted**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 Halton Housing manages and maintains 7500 homes predominantly within the borough of Halton. Most of our homes are for social rent with 220 for shared ownership. The services we provide includes the following:

- Allocation of homes
- Housing and neighbourhood management
- Repairs and maintenance
- Grounds and landscape maintenance
- Development and building new homes
- Improvement of homes and regeneration of neighbourhoods
- Specialist services including, tenancy support, welfare benefit advice, neighbourhood safety, aids, and adaptations

3.2 Halton Housing is a general needs Housing Association, but it has the following homes specifically for older customers including:

- Two extra care schemes totalling one hundred homes with a further scheme Hazelhurst (one hundred homes) due for completion October 2022, for rent, shared ownership, and outright purchase
- Three "traditional" sheltered schemes comprising 102 homes
- 865 bungalows specifically built for older customers

3.3 From profiling information of our 8700 lead customers:

- 3070 are over 55 (35% of all customers)
- 1790 are over 65 (21% of our customers)
- 800 are over 75 (9% of our customers)

Of our lead customers aged over seventy-five:

- 191 live in bungalows
- 58 live in extra care apartments
- 103 live in flats
- 374 live in houses
- 49 live in sheltered accommodation

3.4 Our customers and potential customers can apply for housing online via the Mersey Region allocation process Property Pool Plus (PPP). This allocates homes based on housing needs with banding from A-E (A is highest need) the following factors are considered when prioritising housing:

- Homelessness
- Health issues
- Poor property condition
- Overcrowding
- Under occupation
- Financial circumstances

3.5 Vulnerable customers or customers with limited IT skills are supported by an Allocations Advisor, or a Tenancy Support Officer, to set up an application on PPP. Applicants can request to be placed on 'auto-bid,' which does not require them to log in weekly and place a manual bid on any suitable properties. Housing Options Gateway Advisors review all health and welfare applications to PPP and will assess any need. This is completed alongside the Local Authority, Occupational Therapist.

3.6 To support customers who are experiencing any financial concern HH offers a Welfare Benefit /Money advice service providing expert advice around benefit claims, money advice and budgeting support; this assists over 10% of our customers annually. This service is open to all customers and 20% of those helped each year are aged over sixty-five, with support focused on income maximisation through encouraging claims for pensions and pension credits to top-up incomes. In addition, we help towards priority expenses such as rent, council tax and utility bills alongside signposting support to improve a customer's wellbeing and tackle loneliness.

3.7 From 01.04.22 until 30.9.22 we supported 429 customers, 22% of these were aged 65+ (96 customers). Amongst the over 65s supported we assisted with 1065 issues, providing an annual improvement in

financial circumstances by £991k for the year; primary issues were ensuing housing costs (and council tax) were claimed and support with disability claims with a 95% success rate. We have also assisted with:

- Thirty-five percent of support offered related to disability benefits such as Personal independence payment, Attendance Allowance and Severe Disability Premium awards
- Fifty-seven percent of the support related to Housing Benefit
- Twelve percent were signposted to loneliness support
- Sixty percent reported wellbeing improved

3.8 Halton Housings Independent Living team provides a focused service to customers over the age of 55. It offers a range of support dependant on the need of the individual and maintains customers independence within the home whilst challenging the impact of social isolation and loneliness, it includes the following provision:

- Maintain the highest possible levels of an individual's health and well-being, and prevent where possible any deterioration by fostering a close working relationship between support workers and GPs, primary care health teams and pharmacists
- Identification of any care needs and the range of services available
- Signposting and acting as an advocate on behalf of customers when accessing care and other services Identification

3.9 The independent living service is provided to customers at our sheltered and independent living schemes. As identified, we have three sheltered schemes, one in Widnes and two in Runcorn. These comprise flats or bungalows with communal facilities and support during the day with emergency lifeline cover out of hours.

3.10 In addition, over the last 10 years, Halton Housing has developed three extra care schemes with Barkla Fields, Naughton Fields in Widnes and the newly opened Hazelhurst, a 100-home scheme in Palacefields Runcorn. These schemes combine accommodation with care and support services. Including on-site care and support staff, providing personal care and domestic services, emergency alarms throughout the scheme, with 24-hour help available. They also have extensive communal facilities and services such as a lounge, bistro, multipurpose rooms and community spaces attached as **Appendix 1**.

3.11 In all our independent living schemes there are a hub for the local older community and as well as supporting those directly living in the schemes, we provide services and activities to the local community including

- Exercise classes
- Breakfast clubs
- Art and other classes
- IT literacy skills
- Awareness raising and charity events to coincide with any relevant national /promotional /awareness raising days

- Day trips and other events of scheme

3.12 HH has been concerned about the impact of rising energy costs on all our customers focusing on our more vulnerable customers. Over 95% of our homes have a Standard Assessment Procedure (SAP) rating of C or above. Of the remaining properties we are undertaking a programme of energy improvements including:

- Minimum loft insulation of 300mm
- Upgrading of heating systems]
- Replacement of existing doors to energy efficiency doors

3.13 In addition, we are targeting our most vulnerable customers, (identifying older customers, those on low incomes and those living in our less energy efficient homes), by undertaking home visits to ensure that they have income maximisation, energy and warm home advice to try to minimise where possible the impact of rising energy bills.

3.14 To maintain older customer's independence and wellbeing, working with Halton Borough Council's Complex Care Team we consider if the provision of aids and adaptations to the home will provide a cost-effective solution to maintain them within their own home. We identify the specific needs of the customers, identify if the home can be adapted, considering alternative solutions, and if the adaptation is in the best interest of the customer and Halton Housing. If this criterion is met, we will provide the relevant aids and adaptations.

3.15 The range of aids and adaptations are from minor aids e.g. the provision of grab-rails, handles and ramps to adaptations to meet more complex needs, including conversion to wet rooms, provision of hoists, stair lifts, lowered kitchens and wheelchair friendly homes. It is identified that 1250 of our homes have had aids or been adapted to meet the needs of customers and of these, 755 have a lead customer over the age of sixty-five.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 There are no direct policy implications arising from this report.

5.0 **OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no financial or other implications arising from this report.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The focus of the report is on the provision of homes and services to older customers but in offering this support there can be spin off benefits to children and younger people including:

- Enabling older customers to move to smaller homes freeing up larger homes for families
- Supporting older customers within the local community maintaining connections with the wider family, so strengthening community cohesions

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

As the paper focuses on older people there is limited direct impact on this priority, however the courses and activities provided at the extra care and sheltered schemes offers older customers the opportunity to learn new skills and interests to help maintain an active and independent lifestyle.

6.3 **A Healthy Halton**

Our provision of homes and other services contributes to this priority by providing well maintained and energy efficient homes to enable older customers to remain independent in their home. We also offer additional aids and adaptations and if not beneficial or appropriate a move to alternative accommodation. Our additional services including housing support or welfare benefit money advice offers support and reassurance to maintain health and wellbeing.

6.4 **A Safer Halton**

Halton Housing support the Council's priorities to create a safer Halton by ensuring that older customers have secure well maintained homes within the wider local community In addition the provision of supported housing with specialised support which adds to customer security and peace of mind.

6.5 **Halton's Urban Renewal**

The investment undertaken by Halton Housing contributes to urban renewal whether that is investing in existing homes and communities or in the development of new schemes within the borough especially in partnership with HBC.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 There are no major risks associated with the report.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising because of this report. Halton Housing regularly undertake equality and impact assessments on its provision and services. The provision of housing and support of older customers ensure they continue to receive the appropriate provision and level of services. We take account the views of our older customers both in the wider community and in sheltered

and extra care service by regular forums , meetings and other forms of engagement considering their interest and concerns In developing current and future services.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

None