

18 December 2018		ITEM: 7
Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee		
Out of Hours procedures for Sheltered Housing		
Wards and communities affected: All	Key Decision: Non-key	
Report of: Carol Hinvest, Assistant Director, Housing. Adults Housing and Health Directorate		
Accountable Assistant Director: Carol Hinvest – Assistant Director of Housing		
Accountable Director: Roger Harris – Corporate Director, Adults, Housing and Health		
This report is Public		

Executive Summary

This report outlines the out of hours' procedures that are in place in the Sheltered Housing Service following a request made at the last Housing Overview and Scrutiny meeting.

1. Recommendation

1.1 It is recommended that that the Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee considers and comments upon on the out of hour's provision in Sheltered Housing

2. Reason for recommendation

2.1 This report provides an overview of the Council's out of hours procedures for sheltered housing and provides an opportunity for Overview and Scrutiny Committee members to consider and comment upon our arrangements.

3. Introduction and Background

3.1 Sheltered housing provides tenants with their own accommodation and independence along with the same rights and responsibilities that all Thurrock Council tenants enjoy. In addition the sheltered housing service provides an extra layer of support for tenants which varies according to a tenants needs and their vulnerability.

- 3.2 There are 29 sheltered housing schemes offering almost 1300 properties, which are located around the whole borough. Some schemes are large; others are much smaller and may be “satellited” or attached to a larger scheme.
- 3.3 Sheltered housing officers normal working hours are Monday to Friday 8.30am - 4.45pm and during this time they are responsible for supporting the service across a number of different schemes. This means that they may be working at a different scheme but will still be contactable during the working day. Their work falls into three main areas, tenancy management, enhanced housing management and enhanced support. On average the officers are each responsible for between 70-100 properties. The residential warden service where wardens were on call out of hours ended in 2003 and from that point wardens worked a 37 hour week until all were moved from their accommodation.
- 3.4 Each sheltered housing tenant has access to an alarm system to request help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days of the year through wearing a pendant alarm. When needed, help can be provided either by a sheltered housing officer or through the ‘Careline’ service.
- 3.5 Careline is an alarm centre which serves people in need of assistance outside of the normal working hours of a Sheltered Housing Officer. The alarm centre staff are always available to speak to and help tenants who suddenly become unwell, have an accident or who are faced with a problem.
- 3.6 The Careline alarm system consists of two parts: a base unit that is plugged into the phone line and an electric socket and a pendant that is worn around the wrist or neck. When a call has been activated the alarm warden will answer the call and speak through the base unit. Once they know the problem they will call one of the service user’s emergency contacts. Should they not be able to speak to any of the nominated contacts a Careline call handlers would attend the property. Alternatively, should the service user require urgent medical attention an emergency call would be made to 999 and all necessary and available medical information is provided. Information about the incident is recorded and stored on our system.
- 3.7 Clients join the service for a variety of reasons, these may include; mobility issues, medical conditions, prone to falls, learning difficulties, mental illness, vulnerable or isolation. To date the Careline has 4,631 service users on the system of which 1,127 individuals have a dispersed lifeline installed as part of the new Sheltered Housing upgrade
- 3.8 The service is able to attend the service user’s property quickly as the Careline is based in the middle of the borough and an advisor can, if no other option is available, travel to a Sheltered Housing scheme to provide emergency assistance. The Sheltered Housing officer is not based on site 24 hours per day but there is always 24-hour cover, so no call would ever go unanswered.

- 3.9 The Control Centre operates 24 hours a day, 365 days per year. Over 157,000 calls are received per year by Careline. The service has a 100% record of achieving the call response target which is 85% of all calls answered within 20 seconds. All customer calls are recorded and quality assessed by the Team Manager by assessing recorded calls against criteria to ensure a high quality service is delivered
- 3.10 Careline took 1185 non-emergency calls and undertook 1679 planned visits From April 17 – March 18 (non-emergency calls are calls whereby the advisor may have gone out to the resident if someone had fallen but was uninjured and just needed help getting off the floor, planned visits are appointments made with the resident to install a dispersed lifeline or collect one etc.)
- 3.11 Careline also covers the out of hours calls once the Civic offices close, Monday – Friday and all weekend including bank holidays. The out of hours calls comprise of Social services emergency calls whereby the details of the call is taken and referred to the on-call duty social worker. Many calls come through on the out of hours line whereby the Careline operator would filter the call and liaise with the appropriate officer on call including emergency calls for tenancy management.
- 3.12 Repairs are reported to the out of hours repairs line managed by our contractor Mears.
- 3.13 The service holds the Customer Contact Association global standard which is a quality framework for Customer Services independently assessed by the British Standards Institute.
- 3.14 The Careline equipment is tested monthly if the tenant has not had reason to use it. This way we ensure as far as is possible that the equipment will be working when a tenant needs it.
- 3.15 Even if a tenant is unable to speak (for example if they have had a fall) Careline staff will know who is calling because each alarm has its own unique call number. If it is felt that the tenant needs general support they will contact their next of kin key holder who will attend. If it is an emergency such as a fire or health problem, then the emergency services will be called.
- 3.16 Following a complaint received last year which was not upheld, a review of the service was undertaken and the following recommendations were made for service improvement:
- That a review of the procedures take place to establish if it is appropriate for Careline staff to attend properties when a risk assessment (following a call) has concluded that emergency services should attend on a blue light, especially when next of kin have been informed. This will mean that the emergency services will need to make a judgement call regarding access to properties Officer response: It is recommended that we should continue to

send the Careline staff in instances where the staff member believe they will get to the destination before the family members. This decision should lie with the advisor taking the call to make an appropriate judgement based on all of the information to hand

- That information is given to residents regarding installation of a key safe to ensure swift entry to properties should there be a need for emergency entry. Officer response: At sign up a discussion with residents takes place about whether they want a key safe and it will be included in the forthcoming tenant handbook for sheltered housing
- That the Careline management team undertake more frequent audits of call recording and checking of the recording system to ensure this is in good order. Officer response: Agreed and in progress -
- That the Careline management team ensure that contingency plans are in place so that there is evidence of call recordings should there be a fault in the system. Officer response: The call recording system is only in place for training and quality purposes and is not a requirement of the service provided, however if the recording system does fail this is always reported to the supplier and any replacement parts ordered. Ongoing regular monitoring of the recording equipment as per recommendation 2 will help identify an issue immediately so that it can be reported and resolved at the earliest opportunity to reduce any periods where calls may not be recorded.

4. Sheltered Housing Independent Living Plan

- 4.1 A key part of the Sheltered Housing Service is the work with tenants to understand their needs these include and independent living plan in which tenants indicate what kind of contact they would like and their designated person to be contacted in case of emergency as well as next of kin. The Sheltered Housing Officer will also record any support services that the tenant has and prepare an Emergency Arrangement Plan outlined whether staff have permission to enter the property or not after assessing risks. The Careline service is discussed with tenants at the tenancy sign-up.
- 4.2 Satisfaction with the sheltered housing service currently stands at 70% and the service will be investigating the reasons for dissatisfaction and developing service improvement initiatives in their service plan for 2019/20.
- 4.3 The sheltered housing service received the following complaints and enquiries in 2017/18:
- Stage 1: 9 complaints received, 2 withdrawn and 2 upheld.
 - Stage 2: 9 complaints received, 1 cancelled and 3 upheld.

- Stage 3: 2 complaints received, 1 rejected and 1 upheld.

42 member's enquiries, 2 MP enquiries and 4 MEP enquiries were also received.

5. Careline upgrade

- 5.1 The Council is currently in the process of upgrading all of our sheltered housing and general needs schemes, made a free service in 2017/18, by removing all pull cords and equipment associated with this and replacing the obsolete equipment with a dispersed alarm unit whereby the resident can press this when they need assistance. The Careline Control Centre is also undergoing a major upgrade as the old system has also become outdated and obsolete.
- 5.2 The Careline also monitor assistive technology which again maintains independence for the service user and peace of mind for family and friends. Types of equipment that is monitored; Smoke alarms, CO detectors, door sensors, bed sensors, chair sensors, flashing door beacons for those that are hard of hearing, this is just a snippet of the equipment that is monitored.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 There is a robust 24 hour cover within Sheltered Housing with either the Sheltered Housing Officer or the Careline Service available to residents when they need it.

7. Implications

7.1 Financial

Implications verified by: **Julie Curtis,**
Housing Accountant Corporate Finance

There are no financial implications as this report is considering the current out of hours' procedure for sheltered housing accommodation

7.2 Legal

Implications verified by: **Simon Scrowther,**
Litigation Lawyer

There are no legal implications as this report is considering the current out of hours' procedure for sheltered housing accommodation

7.3 Diversity and Equality

Implications verified by: **Natalie Warren,**

Strategic Lead, Community Development and Equalities

Whilst there are no direct equality implications from this report an effective out of hours service is essential to protecting the wellbeing of residents in sheltered housing who may be vulnerable.

8. Background papers used in preparing the report

None

9. Appendices to the report

None

Report Author:

Sue Kane,
Sheltered Housing Manager