



Gloucester City Homes
Supported Housing
Strategy
2009-2014



Gloucester City Homes Contact Information

How to contact us

Customer Services Team
Gloucester City Homes
Atlantic Suite
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UW

Customer Services Line: 0800 408 2000

Text: 0778 148 2656

Fax: 01452 396599

Minicom: 01452 396161

Email: customer.services@gloscityhomes.co.uk

www.gloscityhomes.co.uk

You can also contact us using our online reporting forms.

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Gujarati

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Polish

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Urdu

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Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	5
2	GCH'S SUPPORTED HOUSING SERVICE	7
3	STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT	8
	PART ONE - THE STRATEGIC AND SERVICE CONTEXT	9
	PART TWO - THE SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE	20
	PART THREE - THE LIFE LINK SERVICE	39
	PART FOUR - SUPPORT TO GENERAL NEEDS VULNERABLE TENANTS.....	41
	PART FIVE - SERVICES FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES	42
	PART SIX - STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION	43
	PART SEVEN - SUMMARY OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES.....	44
	PART EIGHT - RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	45
	PART NINE - KEY MILESTONES 2009 –2014.....	46

1 INTRODUCTION

Gloucester City Homes was established as an Arm's Length Management Company in 2005 to provide housing management services and deliver the decent homes programme to Gloucester City Council's housing stock. This included the transfer of the sheltered housing and life link services. These two services formed the basis of GCH's Supported Housing Service, which since the company was established, has successfully gone through many changes and developments to become the service that it is now.

This strategy reviews these changes and developments, considers the current context and likely future challenges this service area will face, assesses what needs to be done to improve and further develop the services GCH can provide for the people and communities in Gloucester City and beyond over the next five years, in partnership with service users, private, statutory and voluntary sectors.

In particular this strategy considers the national and local trends that are occurring which require an assessment of:

- The need to change the way supported housing services are provided to individual customers and the range of customers to whom support is provided;
- The strategic approach to the use of existing housing stock, and within this the identification of the stock that should be retained, refurbished, remodelled, replaced or added to our purpose built housing, such as sheltered, semi-sheltered, specially designated housing for the elderly.
- The impacts of the changes to Supporting People funding to be introduced in 2011

Residential care in Gloucester is decreasing and people with care needs remain living in the community with such needs addressed within the home.

The quality of housing provided for older people in Gloucester is becoming an increasingly important issue, both with prospective customers with high expectations, and the condition and quality of the properties on offer.

Although Gloucester has a high proportion of residential homes places, use of residential care is decreasing, with higher care needs of customers being met by customers remaining living in the community, under the ethos of 'A Home for Life' and appropriate support and care being provided in their home.

It is inevitable that the trend to support and care for people in their own home, which only a decade ago would have been met by residential and nursing homes will lead to an increase in the numbers of older people requiring sheltered and retirement housing.

At the same time, the letting of existing sheltered housing will also shift from solely housing criteria to a balance of housing and support / care needs. One of the core issues in respect of this strategy is what proportion of the stock is suitable and fit for purpose in meeting the needs of future residents.

2 GCH'S SUPPORTED HOUSING SERVICE

The Supported Housing Service currently consists of the following service areas:

- Sheltered Housing Service (management of the buildings and the support service for tenants who are over 60 year old and disabled people of a younger age). (367 homes)
- Semi-sheltered housing for over 60 year olds and disabled people of younger age. (109 homes)
- Elderly person designated properties with Lifelink community alarm for the over 55 years olds and disabled people of any age. (488 homes)
- Community hub support for older people (short term pilot project funded by Supporting People and based at Podsmead)
- Handy person service for sheltered housing tenants
- Lifelink dispersed community alarm system provided in partnership with Hereford monitoring control centre to all tenures and the provision of Telecare installations to support independent living in own homes.
- Support services for vulnerable general needs housing tenants to enable them to manage their tenancy successfully.
- Short stay homeless hostel and support to hostel users (management of the building and the support service for occupants).

These services are provided in partnership with service users, Gloucester City Council and Gloucestershire Supporting People.

3 STRUCTURE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This strategy is structured as follows:

Part One	The strategic and service context
Part Two	The Sheltered Housing Service incorporating semi and elderly designated properties
Part Three	The life link service
Part Four	Support to general needs vulnerable tenants
Part Five	Services for homeless families
Part Six	Stakeholder Consultation
Part Seven	Summary of service improvement and development priorities
Part Eight	Resource Implications
Part Nine	Key milestones 2009 -2014

PART ONE - THE STRATEGIC AND SERVICE CONTEXT

1 GCH Service Context

GCH has a clearly stated service ethos:

“Tenants are at the heart of what we do - Customers drive our services”

1 The company’s vision is:

“To be a first class social housing agency, delivering modern, efficient, high quality customer-focused services so that we can provide an excellent quality of life for our tenants and leaseholders in their homes and their community.”

This applies equally to its most vulnerable customers who due to age, disability or other special circumstances have need of additional support to sustain their independence at home.

GCH will ensure that in developing it’s services, policies and procedures it will comply with its values to ensure a quality of process and outcome that achieves the company’s vision.

Supported Housing Services

GCH recognises that it has a key role to play in ensuring that the vulnerable people within the homes that it manages and within its wider community have access to support and services that will enable them to have a good quality of life and to maintain their independence.

GCH works closely with Supporting People, Primary Care Trust, Social Services and local voluntary organisations to ensure that the appropriate support is available to the most vulnerable customers. In particular GCH works with Knightstone Housing Association and Guidepost to provide floating support to vulnerable tenants requiring more intensive support. The nature of this support is such that it is flexible and is provided for as long as the tenant has a need. GCH co-ordinates and monitors the quality of support provided and ensures that tenants who need this additional support receive it.

Sheltered Housing Services

The team consists of 11 Scheme Managers and 2 relief managers who deliver a wide range of support services to the older residents living in the sheltered housing schemes. The team also visit older residents living in Gloucester City Council properties in the local communities. The service was awarded a Gold Standard by the Supporting People Partnership in September 2006 and was the first organisation to receive this award in the County.

In April 2008, funding was received from supporting people to set up a pilot community hub from the sheltered housing scheme in Podsmead. It was hoped that if this service was successful that it would be extended to other schemes where the wider community can benefit from the communal facilities and activities held in the sheltered schemes, however under the current economic climate, it is unlikely that funding will be available in the near future.

Lifelink Services

A specialist team provides advice, guidance and installs alarms for vulnerable and elderly residents citywide. The team repair alarms and manage a 24-hour call out service, in partnership with the Hereford Housing control centre. The service plays a vital part in delivering the Older Peoples' Strategy of the Council.

Services for Homeless Families

In March 2009 GCH opened its first hostel for homeless families at Caridas House, providing short stay accommodation for 14 homeless families as an alternative to bed and breakfast. GCH will explore similar options when they arise in future.

2 National Context

Demographics

The UK's population is ageing. Although the population grew by 8 per cent in the last thirty-five years, from 55.9 million in 1971 to 60.6 million in mid-2006, this change has not occurred evenly across all age groups. The population aged over 65 grew by 31 per cent, from 7.4 to 9.7 million, whilst the population aged under 16 declined by 19 per cent, from 14.2 to 11.5 million.

The largest percentage growth in population in the year to mid-2006 was at ages 85 and over (5.9 per cent). The number of people aged 85 and over grew by 69,000 in the year to 2006, reaching a record 1.2 million. This large increase reflects improving survival and the post World War One baby boomers now reaching this age group.

National policy context

Current national policy supports two twin themes. First to increase the supply of accommodation available for older people, while maximising the housing options across tenure and property types for older people to support independent living and access appropriate services where needed e.g. through extra care housing. The second aspect of policy relates to social care and health and in particular the personalisation of care, which aims to transform social care by giving older people greater choice and control over services and funding.

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A national housing strategy for an ageing society

In February 2008 the Government published a major new housing strategy giving older people greater choice and addressing the challenges of an ageing population. This set out the government's vision for meeting the growing housing demands of an ageing population and ways to meet the changing lifestyle needs and aspirations of current and future generations of older people.

The accompanying review published in December 2008 details the desired destination in five years time as:

Older people will have housing that supports healthy, active and independent living in welcoming communities. Housing, neighbourhoods and communities will be more inclusive, attractive and sustainable for an ageing population. There will be more mainstream and specialist homes of the right type in the right location for older people. New housing will be planned and built to Lifetime Homes Standards and new communities will be built to be Lifetime Neighbourhoods. The implications of ageing for housing and communities will be well understood by professionals and the public alike.

Excellent information and advice will be available for all. Many more homes will be warm and comfortable. Major and minor adaptations will be more easily obtained. Home improvement and handyperson services will be widely accessible in every part of the country. Where housing services are needed they will be more personal, progressive, high quality and joined-up.

Some of the impacts of this are:

- The need to tailor support to people's individual needs enables them to live full and independent lives;
- Housing providers need to offer people a choice in how and where they live;
- Housing should be well designed and accessible;
- Lifetime Homes is a set of design standards that ensure that new and refurbished housing is accessible and adaptable to which all social housing should adhere from 2011.
- The need to work with statutory and other agencies to create lifetime neighbourhoods that are accessible, comfortable, welcoming and enjoyable to avoid the social exclusion of older people and encourage their participation in the community.

The Help the Aged report 'Towards Common Ground', also published in 2008, suggests ten components that make up a Lifetime Neighbourhood and identifies some practicable steps that can be taken in this respect.

Personalisation of Care

As Supporting People evolves and in the context of introducing more freedom and choice in an ageing society, people who need care and support will have the option

to choose their own care and support provider, paid for by their own personal budget under the new initiative known as the personalisation of care. This has the potential for GCH sheltered housing residents to choose another provider of their service even though they live in a GCH run sheltered housing scheme. This means that GCH needs to closely consider how its services are promoted to ensure that its residents purchase its services.

Supporting People Funding

National policy for housing related support services is determined by the Communities and Local Government Department which is responsible for developing and implementing the Supporting People programme nationally through a range of Supporting People Partnerships which usually cover a county council area or a unitary council area.

The Supporting People programme offers vulnerable people the opportunity to improve their quality of life by providing a stable environment, which enables greater independence.

It is a grant programme which enables the provision of housing related support services to help vulnerable people maintain or improve their ability to live independently.

This support tries to fill the gap between independence and care services provided mainly by social services authorities and / or primary care trusts.

It can include helping an older person stay in their own home, helping someone coming out of homelessness to move towards having their own home, or helping a woman fleeing domestic violence.

The key focus of the programme is on getting the right services and outcomes for vulnerable people.

This support is provided in a variety of ways including:

- **Sheltered housing**, where an officer employed by the owner, landlord or their agent, provide regular welfare checks and ensure that residents receive the necessary support from other agencies to help maintain their independence. Additional communal facilities are provided to encourage residents to feel part of a community such as common rooms for social activities, guest rooms to allow relatives to visit and on-site laundries.
- **Semi-sheltered housing**, where an officer employed by the owner, landlord or their agent, provide regular welfare checks and ensure that residents receive the necessary support from other agencies to help maintain their independence.
- **Community Alarms** to provide reassurance and emergency help to vulnerable residents living in housing specifically designated for the elderly such as bungalows and in any general housing in which a vulnerable resident

may live alone or with their family.

- **Floating support**, where support providers either provide general support services to residents of a particular age or specialist support for certain groups e.g. disabled people.

When Supporting People was introduced in 2003, the actual costs of the service far exceeded the government's initial projections, and since this time the programme has been under tremendous pressure. Certain service areas were protected through a ring fence and the creation of block purchase contracts to the then existing providers, but as from 2011, this ring fence will be lifted. This means that all services will be open to competition, and the pressures upon the funding may mean that some currently funded services will face significant funding cuts or lose funding completely.

For GCH this is a double edged sword in so far as there may be the opportunity to bid to provide county wide services or current supporting people funding may be greatly reduced or withdrawn. This has the potential to seriously undermine GCH's ability to maintain the existing sheltered housing service. GCH currently receives £329,298 p.a. from Supporting People to assist with the provision of its Sheltered Housing Service.

National Performance Indicators

The Government in 2007 announced the new national indicator set for local authorities and local authority partnerships. The supported housing-related national indicators ones to which GCH will be able contribute are:

- Number of vulnerable people achieving independent living (NI141)
- Number of vulnerable people who are supported to maintain independent living (NI142)
- Offenders under probation supervision living in settled and suitable accommodation at the end of their order or licence (NI143)
- Adults with learning disabilities in settled accommodation (NI145)
- Care leavers in suitable accommodation (NI147)
- Adults in contact with secondary mental health services in settled accommodation (NI149)
- Number of households in temporary accommodation (NI156)

The Audit Commission has also identified some of the key areas in which housing providers contribute to the national performance indicators. Those which are specifically impacted by this strategy include:

- Supporting disability and vulnerable people to live independently
- Maximising housing benefits

3 Local and regional context

Putting Older People First in the South West

This report, which was published in November 2008 by the Housing Corporation in partnership with the Care Services Improvement Partnership and the Housing and Learning Network, highlights the challenges that lie ahead for the region in respect of older people in the region. It charts the demographic change highlighted earlier and the pressure that comes with this change, not just in terms of the number of older people in the community but also the specialist support that is likely to be required for instance the likely number of people with dementia across the region may see an increase from 36,000 to 56,000 over the next seventeen years. In addition it highlights the trend for people to choose to move to the South West in retirement, the high proportion of owner occupiers (84% of sixty to sixty four year olds are owner occupiers) and the number of 'younger' older people with a learning disability, which will put pressure on resources.

In terms of housing supply it identifies that many local authorities and Registered Providers are looking to decommission or remodel their ordinary sheltered housing stock as they are having difficulty in letting accommodation that is no longer suitable or sub-standard. Anecdotally, much sheltered housing is considered no longer fit for the future in terms of design, size and space or accessibility standards.

It concludes with the identification of eleven key partnership actions required at a regional and local level:

- Expansion of the range of housing options for older people
- Review of future planning and design standards for older people
- The need to establish the level of extra care housing needed in each area
- The need to review the condition, accessibility, location and value of the current stock of sheltered housing with regard to its fitness for future needs, and establish priorities for adaptation, refurbishment and replacement
- The need to improve the quality of information available concerning sheltered and extra care housing to better inform choices made under choice based letting schemes
- Maximise capital investment to meet the demand for new housing for older people and specialist accommodation with care where this is a local priority
- Supporting People commissioners to plan for the expansion of low level preventative support such as practical and financial information and advice, home improvement services and assistive technology
- Practical and financial assistance provided to owner occupiers who want to downsize
- Establish with tenants the level of demand for downsizing and identify the practical and financial assistance that could be provided to help those who want to do so
- Develop models of care and support that reduce duplication of effort and resources by multi-tasking and effective information sharing
- Regional housing and planning boards to raise awareness amongst

commissioners, providers and the wider population of the implications of and available options for housing of an ageing population

Population

Gloucester has an estimated population of 111,900 and covers an area of 5 square miles. There are 47,900 households in the city, around 10% of which live in the 4,658 properties owned by the City Council, which are managed by GCH. This population is expected to increase both in real terms and in household numbers, such that by 2026 there will be 58,000 households within the city¹.

51% of single-person households are lone pensioners and this, together with the increasing lifespan of pensioners, is projected to continue.

40% of households in Gloucester have someone with limiting long-term illnesses.

The city is by far the most deprived of all local authority districts in Gloucestershire, 6 of the county's Super Output Areas are within the most deprived 10% nationally and 5 of these are in Gloucester and in areas of the city where our tenants live: - Podsmead, Matson and Robinswood, Westgate (2), Kingsholm and Wotton. An area of Podsmead ranks the highest of those in Gloucestershire. Barton and Tredworth also ranks in the top 10 most deprived in Gloucestershire.

By 2026, the number of people aged 65+ in the County is expected to exceed the current level by 52,000 people, with people aged 75+ accounting for most of the increase. This will greatly increase the number of pensioner and lone-pensioner households in the housing market.

There will also be the demographic challenges namely the increasing number of "younger" older people (65 – 74), decreasing numbers in the middle range of older people (75 – 84) and increases in those over 85. This suggests that different approaches to the allocation needs of each group should be considered.

Profile of GCH tenants

GCH has an extensive database that profiles all its tenants. An extract of the tenant profile informs that in April 2009:

- 33 % of tenants are over 65.
- 31% of tenants have some form of disability, with 21% having specific mobility difficulties.

Comparatively 16.9% of the City population suffers from long term limiting illness with 7% of the economically active population having long-term illness.

¹ *DCLG 2004 based projection quoted in Housing Market Assessment 2008*

In addition:

- 65.8% (3,867) of all tenants are in receipt of Housing Benefit
- 76.6% (1,906) of GCH's over 65 year old are in receipt of Housing Benefit
- 21% (976) are claiming 100% benefit as Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance claimants (Working Age)
- 22.8 % (1045) are claiming 100% benefit as Pension Credit claimants (Pension Age)
- 4.6% (210) are claiming incapacity benefit (known as Employment and Support Allowance from 1st October 2008)

Supporting Gloucester City Council's Housing Strategy

GCH is committed to supporting the aims and objectives of Gloucester City Council's Housing Strategy. Development of the new Strategy will begin this year, with information provided by the recently completed countywide Housing Market Assessment and the Housing Needs Survey, which will be undertaken later this year.

The current Strategy has five main priorities:

- Balancing Housing Markets
- Regeneration
- Meeting Housing Needs
- Realigning Homelessness and Rehousing Services
- Meeting the Needs of Vulnerable, Special Needs and Supported Housing Clients

GCH contributes in all these areas and in particular this strategy addresses GCH's contribution in respect of:

- Adapting the Social Housing Stock to Match Changing Needs
- Meeting the needs of vulnerable people

Supporting other GCC and Gloucestershire County Council strategies

The overarching Housing Strategy referred to above is delivered through a number of supporting strategies to which GCH contributes. These are as follows:

- Gloucester City Older Persons Strategy
- Housing Strategy for People with Physical and Sensory Disabilities in Gloucester City
- Supporting People Strategy

In addition GCH is working with the PCT through the Healthy Living Partnership.

Gloucester City Sheltered Housing Stock

There are 19 Sheltered Schemes within Gloucester City run by different social

landlords

Owned by	Type of scheme	Managed by	Number of properties
Gloucester City Council	9.5 sheltered schemes	Gloucester City Homes	367
Oxbode	0.5 sheltered scheme	Gloucester City Homes	17
RSL / Associations	9 sheltered schemes	Various RSL	335
Hanover Housing	1 extra sheltered	Hanover Housing	48
Gloucester City Council	4 semi sheltered schemes	Gloucester City Homes	109
Gloucester City Council	488 elderly designated homes	Gloucester City Homes	488

In addition to Social Housing stock there are a number of privately owned sheltered and extra-care schemes existing or being planned throughout the city.

In 2010 a new care village for older people will be opened by Rooftop Housing Group at St Oswald's, close to the City Centre and will provide one hundred new homes for older people with a wide range of communal facilities. Approximately half of these properties will be for affordable rent and when available are likely to impact upon GCH's ability to let some of it's traditional sheltered housing properties.

Other Support Services available within Gloucester City:

All other supported housing services are provided by a range agencies commissioned by the Gloucestershire Supporting People Partnership Board. GCH works in partnership with these agencies to ensure that it's customers receive the support they require to maintain their independence.

The following list gives examples of the agencies that Gloucester City Homes work in Partnership with:

- **for young people** – Soulutions provides support and advice to find and retain suitable accommodation and employment for care leavers (aged 16 - 21) Tel: 01452 427796 and Futures at Knightstone provide support and advice to find and retain suitable accommodation, for young people generally (aged 16 and above), as well as for older people of working age - please see below.
- **for people of working age** – Futures at Knightstone provides a support service to help working age people (aged 16-59) keep suitable accommodation. Tel: 01452 783550
- **for people of retirement age** – Guideposts Trust provides a support service to help older people (aged 60 and above) keep suitable accommodation. Tel: 01452 410101
- **for people with a physical disability** – there are a range of support providers

for people with a physical disability, for example:

- Q-Care provide support in the home; help in gaining access to other services; support in managing finances; and advice and advocacy, for people with sensory disabilities Tel: 0845 68 86 672;
 - Gloucestershire Lifestyles provide services for people with a physical disability Tel: 01452 530184; and
 - Living Independently in Gloucestershire run a direct payment scheme for people with a disability which allows you to purchase services you need to help you remain independent in your own home. For further information please Tel: 01452 411000.
-
- **for people who are mentally challenged** – Gloucestershire Partnerships NHS Trust have mental health Teams who can provide advice and support Tel: 01452 563102
 - **for people with a learning disability** – Care Connections provides support at home including advice on managing money, cooking, cleaning, advocacy, medication, shopping and health. They can be contacted on telephone: 01452 525553
 - **for people with a drug or alcohol addiction** - The Gloucester Drug and Alcohol Service provides advice, information and support in gaining access to services for people who are affected by their own or someone else's drug or alcohol use. They also provide advocacy services. They can be contacted on telephone: 0845 86 38 323

4 Supported Housing SWOT Analysis

The supported housing team undertook a SWOT analysis of the current service.

STRENGTHS

- The team is strong based upon the competence, quality and commitment of all staff
- The facilities at the sheltered schemes: all are DDA compliant and have had internal decent homes work completed
- Reputation of the sheltered housing service: Gold standard and feedback from clients, other stakeholders and within the local neighbourhoods
- Good network and the team are good at networking with other agencies and providers, locally and nationally
- Local organisations, hospitals, social workers come to scheme managers for advice
- Team is flexible ambitious and forward thinking
- A range of services are provided: sheltered housing, Lifeline and the Homeless

hostel and the pilot handyperson service

- The team is great in a crisis and everyone mucks in to help out

WEAKNESSES

- Limitations on what the team can currently provide
- IT skills are patchy
- Low level understanding and appreciation across the organisation of the scheme manager's role
- Sometimes excluded for company events because of the nature of their role especially so for scheme managers
- Sherborne and Clapham schemes have problems with access and mobility issues
- Inter team communication especially with repairs has been a problem
- No performance monitoring therefore low visibility
- Information provided to tenants needs to be improved
- Scheme managers should carry out pre-tenancy interviews

OPPORTUNITIES

- Expansion of hub concept
- Remodel Sherborne and new development at St James
- Provision of services to other homeless groups:
 - Ex- offenders
 - Single women under 25
 - Ex service men and women
 - Prolific and persistent offenders
 - Male refuge
- Expand sheltered housing service into the private sector
- Develop schemes as a community resources
- Work more closely with the PCT
- Care and repair home improvements
- Handy person service into the private sector
- Floating support contract when up for renewal in 2011

THREATS

- Loss of supporting people funding
- Care village in St Oswalds
- Caridas House loses income/GCC terminates existing contract
- Properties become difficult to let
- Choice Based lettings
- Long term affordability of service
- Missing opportunities by not having the resources to respond effectively

This has been used to inform this document and to identify areas for improvement, which have been incorporated into the team's project plan. The opportunities and threats are incorporated into this strategy.

PART TWO - THE SHELTERED HOUSING SERVICE

Introduction

Sheltered housing in its traditional form has evolved significantly over the last 10 years. The traditional role of the warden as a 'good neighbour' has shifted dramatically to a professional and recognised support worker with the ability to offer a vast range of skills and knowledge to customers.

Older people's aspirations and needs have changed with an increased focus on choice around housing type and support services, which are holistic and tailored to the individual. Choice is a key issue when looking at the design and marketing of schemes and this should be addressed through investment opportunities, which range from simple modernisation to large-scale redevelopment, whilst the focus remains on the simplest way to address current and future need.

The involvement of key partners is crucial to ensure providers adopt a broader approach, which addresses the key links between care and support.

With a very new and emerging culture around review and monitoring of service quality, housing and choice, support providers face new challenges and continuing demands to provide excellent (Gold Standard) services, which can be benchmarked against other national providers.

The introduction of Supporting People reviews has provided a framework for monitoring quality, value for money and strategic relevance as well as a national standard for improvement. Efficiency is viewed as an essential element of such reviews particularly with continued budgetary constraints across the country. Sheltered Housing is designated for any customer over the age of 60 years, who has a need for supported living in a suitably adapted property.

Gloucester City homes Sheltered Scheme details

All ten sheltered schemes have a dedicated Community Scheme Manager and all properties are hard wired with a 24-hour alarm service connected to our Control Centre in the Hereford, they are all covered out of hours, 365 days a year is provided by a Duty Scheme Manager.

All schemes have a degree of communal facilities e.g. lounges, laundries, kitchens & gardens that are for use by our customers.

Some schemes have guest rooms that can be rented for a nominal charge by customers for their families and friends.

Gloucester City Homes manage 367 Gloucester City Council sheltered properties, in addition to 6 Gloucester Housing Association & 17 Oxboode Housing properties which are not included in the table below.

Sheltered Housing								
	Bed sit Flats	1 bed flat	1 bed bung / house	2 be d flat	2 bed bung	3 bed flat	3 bed bung	Total
Badgervale Court	0	0	0	0	28	0	0	28
Broom House	0	28	5	0	0	1	0	34
Charter Court	0	32	5 +9	0	0	0	0	46
Clapham Court	0	77	0	0	0	0	0	77
Dickens Close	0	0	21	0	0	0	0	21
Halford House	0	14	9	16	3	1	0	43
Nightingale House	0	17	0	14	0	0	0	31
Oliver Close	0	0	29	0	14	0	0	43
Sherborne House	18	4	0	1	0	0	0	23
St James Close	0	0	20	0	0	0	1	21
Total	18	172	98	31	45	2	1	367

Gloucester City Homes Semi-sheltered housing

Semi Sheltered Housing is designated for any customer over the age of 60 years, who has a low level need for supported living in a suitably adapted property.

Semi- sheltered housing comprises of 4 different locations across the City that is made up of groups of one-bedroom bungalows. They do not have communal facilities but they are supported by the services of a Semi Scheme Manager.

All properties are hard wired with a 24-hour alarm service connected to our Control Centre in Hereford. They are covered out of hours, 365 days a year by a Duty Scheme Manager, if the customer has no local contacts to respond to them in an emergency.

Semi-sheltered Housing (Bungalows)					
	Bed sit	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	Total
Blakeney Close	0	27	0	0	27
Chaucer Close	0	32	0	0	32
Copperfield Close	0	23	0	0	23
Linnet Close	0	27	0	0	27
Totals	0	109	0	0	109

The combined total of sheltered and semi-sheltered housing for Gloucester City Homes is:

Total of sheltered and semi-sheltered housing					
	Bed sit	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed	Total
Totals	18	382	76	3	478

Elderly Designated Properties

Elderly Designated properties are designed for any customer over the age of 60 years, who has a need for low-level support through an Alarm service.

All properties are hard wired with a 24-hour alarm service connected to the Control Centre in the Hereford. A Duty Scheme Manager provides out of hours cover 365 days a year, if the customer has no local contacts, to respond to them in an emergency.

Elderly Designated Properties									
	Bed sit Flats	1 bed flat	1 bed bung	2 bed flat	2 bed bung	3 bed flat	3 bed bung	4 bed bung	Total
Cheltenham Road		8							8
Alington Close		4		4					8
Archdeacon Court	14	14							28
Awdry way					3				3
Barnaby Close			4		9				13
Barton Street		4							4
Bathurst Road		12							12
Betchamin Close			4		4				8
Breinton way					8		2		10
Campion Close			3						3
Castle Cottages		8	6						14
Cherry Gardens		12							12
Clare Street				10					10
Denmark Road					2				2
Dinglewell			7						7
Dombey Bungalows			3						3
Dorrit Close			6						6
Forsythe			11						11
Gere Close		6							6
Hammond Way					8		3		11
Hill Hay Road			22						22

Elderly Designated Properties									
	Bed sit Flats	1 bed flat	1 bed bung	2 bed flat	2 bed bung	3 bed flat	3 bed bung	4 bed bung	Total
Hilfield Coachouse		4							4
Holmleigh Road			6						6
India Road		8							8
Keats Avenue			7						7
Lilac Way			17						17
Mayall Court					8		1	1	10
Melbourne Street		8							8
Millbrook Close				4					4
Millin Avenue					6				6
Milton Avenue			11		4				15
Parry Road		12							12
Peggotty Bungalows			8						8
Pickwick Close			8						8
Primrose Close		9			3				12
Prinknash Road			6						6
Robert Raikes Avenue					6		3		9
Silver Close			5						5
St Peters Road			11						11
St. Aldwyn Road		4							4
St. Marys Close	1	19							20
The Butts		10	8		3				21
The Lampreys		44							44
The Laurels		8							8
Vetch Close			17						17
Vine Terrace			6						6
Wilton Close					10				10
Woodpecker							1		1
Total	15	194	176	18	74		10	1	488

Letting properties

Gloucester City Council manages the waiting list and allocations to sheltered housing. Placements need to be appropriate to the clients needs to ensure that they can sustain their tenancy as they age and / or health fails or to the suitability of the property allocated.

In many cases, with no formal assessment procedure in place, allocations result in applicants with health or mobility issues offered properties, which cannot meet their needs either now or in the future.

In October 2009 the process for letting properties will change with the introduction of a County-wide Choice Based lettings scheme (Gloucester Homeseeker Partnership), whereby applicants seeking accommodation will bid for vacant properties which will be advertised on a weekly basis. Assistance will be given to vulnerable applicants

and it is important that the current concerns regarding the appropriateness of the offer of accommodation are addressed as part of the scheme implementation process.

Up until now there has not been a problem in letting sheltered housing property, however in the last few months it is becoming noticeably more difficult to find new tenants for vacancies in Clapham Court and Sherborne House. At Clapham Court the widely publicised problems with the lifts has led to loss of confidence and apprehension for prospective new tenants, however the extensive programme of decent homes work which commences this year, together with the refurbishment of the lifts, should make the properties more attractive and easier to let.

A full appraisal of Sherborne House will be completed during 2009/10.

Sheltered Scheme Security

It is recognised that the majority of older people living in Sheltered Housing schemes are vulnerable therefore Gloucester City Homes has Health and Safety obligations to make the schemes as safe and secure as possible. Different levels of Anti Social Behaviour that can disturb the harmony of living in a safe environment come under two different categories, internally influenced and externally influenced

Internally, many people have to live in harmony under one roof, and this can be very challenging with different tolerance levels from individuals living on the scheme. Problems can be created by noise disturbance from flats above or below, clients keeping different hours and disturbing others sleeping patterns, visitors coming and going making a lot of noise or generally neighbours not getting on with each other

External problems of Anti Social Behaviour come from outside influences; this could include, for example youths or local residents not acting in a courteous manner.

GCH has to make sure that all of the sheltered communal facilities as well as the individual properties are protected to the best of its ability to make them a desirable, safe and secure environment to live in, both now and in the future.

The Future of Sheltered Housing

Changing Demand

In part one of this strategy consideration was given to the changing demographics of an aging society, and the need to ensure services provided are adaptable to enable longer-term independence for older people, and the provision of services and accommodation that supports a healthy and safe older age.

Sheltered Housing has traditionally been viewed as a key contributor to securing independent living however the nature of sheltered housing has changed in line with

the shift in the way in which sheltered housing is funded, resulting in a greater focus upon levels of need, and in addition many older sheltered housing schemes provide smaller homes such as one bed and bedsit accommodation, some of the latter with shared facilities, which are no longer viewed as desirable accommodation in the 21st Century.

Sherborne House scheme is now in need of greater investment to address issues around the provision of bed sits, A feasibility assessment is shortly to be commissioned.

The changing demand project has also identified that there should be reduction in the number of properties designated for older people within the council housing stock. This reflects the need to provide more units of accommodation for single people below retirement age. Consultation with tenants will be carried once the changing demand project is signed off by the City Council later in 2009.

Scheme Improvements

Gloucester City Homes recognises that the design of properties, adaptations, fittings and furnishings is a growing area of concern when looking at properties as being fit for purpose, and in this respect, since the company's inception, GCH has embarked upon a programme of investment in the sheltered housing schemes, in line with the decent homes programme and having regard to Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) requirements, recommendations from Occupational Therapists, Crime Prevention Officers and Fire Safety advisors. In addition GCH scheme standards are benchmarked against other providers and recognised best practice.

In 2006 an assessment was made of improvements required in the sheltered housing schemes. This is detailed in the schedule below together with details of the work completed in the last three years:

Communal Facilities – Minimum Requirements between 2007 and 2012	
All schemes to be covered by CCTV cameras	Completed July 2009
All schemes to provide level access into scheme and car parks	Completed March 2009
All schemes to have adequate car parking spaces with at least two dedicated to disabled bays	Completed March 2009
All schemes to have locking mechanisms on windows so that they can be locked open on warm nights	There is no funding available. In June 2009 a bid for funding of £44,000 through the government's Safer Homes Fund was unsuccessful.
All schemes to have updated modern open plan DDA compliant communal kitchen facilities, with cookers, dishwashers and fridge freezers	All completed March 2009 with exception of Clapham Court which is currently being appraised

Communal Facilities – Minimum Requirements between 2007 and 2012	
All schemes to have at least one DDA compliant communal toilet facility	Completed March 2009 with the exception of Sherborne House where this is not possible due to the design and layout
All block schemes to have adequate communal buggy storage facilities that are DDA compliant	Plans being drawn up for remaining three schemes at Nightingale House, Halford House and Badger Vale
All schemes to have up to date facilities in guest rooms i.e. kitchen / bathroom	Two schemes: Sherborne House and Dickens Close do not have the space without taking out current properties. All others have been upgraded
All schemes to have latest alarm system technology that is complete with telecare overlay, allowing extra facilities to added on a need basis	Three schemes have now been upgraded. Remaining seven will be upgraded if funding becomes available. This will cost an estimated £160,000.
All schemes to have suitable level access landscaping that is DDA compliant	More investment is needed especially at Nightingale House and Charter Court
All schemes external facilities and car parks to have adequate lighting and grab rails	This has been covered as far as practicable as part of the DDA upgrade programme completed in March 2009
All communal facilities redecorated every five years	Programmed in to the external painting contract
All schemes have total refurbishment of furniture, curtains, blinds and carpets every 10 years	Growth bid to be submitted for revenue budget for 2010/11
All schemes have adequate lighting in all communal areas, that is modern energy efficient	No programme currently running. Lighting is on service contract and is renewed when fails
All schemes have up to date electrical wiring	Completed with the exception of Clapham Court which is programmed into this years decent homes programme
All schemes have fit for purpose water tanks with a regular maintenance agreement and Legionella checks.	Completed and in place
All waste disposal / sewage pipes are adequate for the volume	Completed with the exception of Clapham Court which is programmed into this years decent homes programme
All schemes have fob door entry to all entrances	Completed March 2009

Communal Facilities – Minimum Requirements between 2007 and 2012	
Where existing communal bathing facilities are provided they are up dated with level access showers and wet rooms	Completed March 2009
Laundry rooms are all accessible with a choice of a low access machine and a higher access machine	Due to be completed by March 2011
All corridor fire doors are on self closing fasteners connected to the fire alarm system	Completed with the exception of Clapham Court which is programmed into this years decent homes programme
All communal fire alarms are fitted with a flashing beacon	Completed March 2008
Stair lifts in all block schemes as an alternative for people who do not like lifts plus back up when lift breaks down / needs refurbishing	This proposal has not yet been fully appraised
Personal care room facilities for hairdressing, chiropody and counselling	This is an aspirational standard and is unlikely to be achievable without reducing the number of properties in a scheme and carrying out significant remodelling. This is something which will need to be considered as part of the comprehensive review of sheltered housing in the future action plan
PAT testing on a yearly planned programme	Completed
Fire alarm/Fire Extinguishers/Emergency Lighting testing on a planned programme Smoke detectors are fitted as standard and maintained on a planned programme	Completed
Lifts on a maintenance programme	Completed
Door entry on a planned maintenance programme	Completed
Gas servicing on a planned maintenance programme	Completed
No gas on block schemes, to eliminate the danger of an explosion	The only block scheme with gas remaining is Halford House.
All electric sockets and TV Ariel connections to be at waist height	This will be incorporated into rewiring programmes as necessary

Communal Facilities – Minimum Requirements between 2007 and 2012	
Boundary fencing for better security, where appropriate	Review and financial appraisal underway
Easy open lever handles on doors and windows	This is dealt with on an individual basis in line with OT recommendations
Reposition power sockets at a higher level from the floor	This is dealt with on an individual basis in line with OT recommendations
Properties	
All kitchens are replaced with Occupational Therapist recommendations	This was taken into account as part of the decent homes programme
All bathrooms are replaced with level access showers not baths unless tenant requests bath	This is being completed on a needs basis due to funding implications. As at March 2008 there were 125 bathrooms in sheltered schemes without a level access shower
All level access showers are fitted with a fold down seat to allow tenant to sit down and shower	Installed in line with OT recommendations
All level access showers are fitted with low level doors to allow carer to assist with bathing without getting wet	Installed in line with OT recommendations
All taps and toilets are of lever handle standard	Installed in line with OT recommendations
All properties have a dual push flush toilet	Installed as standard as part of decent homes programme
Charter Court bathrooms are adapted to suit Asian requirements with toilets re sited where necessary not to face Mecca	This is outstanding pending feasibility review as part of decent homes upgrade
Low level taps and sinks are installed at Charter Court to assist with feet washing	This is outstanding pending feasibility review as part of decent homes upgrade
All properties have level access or ramps to front and back doors	This is done on a need basis with OT recommendation
Grab rails are fitted as standard to front and back doors, toilets and shower / bath facilities	This is done on a need basis with OT recommendation
All properties are fitted with visual door entry systems within their properties	Need a rolling programme for future installation, only in Clapham House & Broom House
Remote control door opening facility when required	This is done on a need basis with OT recommendation

Communal Facilities – Minimum Requirements between 2007 and 2012	
All properties have modern central heating systems, not storage heaters	Feasibility report commissioned from Severn Wye energy.
All properties have secure front and back doors with a suited lock and thumb screw internal locking, so keys are not left in the door restricting access	Work in progress
All sheltered properties are fitted with a suited lock to allow access in an emergency	Work in progress
All properties have adequate loft installation	All schemes are in programme 2 and are currently being surveyed
All tenant properties are decorated every seven years as standard	This is not incorporated as general policy. Currently sheltered housing tenants are able to benefit from the older persons decoration scheme in which one room is redecorated each year for vulnerable tenants without support from families
Intermediate room upgraded to DDA standard with level access shower, grab rails and new kitchen	This room is at Nightingale House. Currently there is no funding available for this. GCH continues to seek support from the PCT with this
Smoke detectors all wired into the alarm system, so connecting to control centre	Completed
Visual alarms for fire, front door fitted when needed inside properties for people with special needs	Installed on a need basis

Summary of the Sheltered Housing Service projected income and expenditure in 2009

Income	Total	
Sheltered (support charge)	291,192.48	
semi sheltered (support charge)	32,909.28	324,101.75
Oxbode Housing Association	15,000.00	
Gloucester Housing Association	6,500.00	
Intermediate care room	3,150.00	
Guest room	5,400.00	
Hub Money	12,000.00	
	366,151.75	42,050.00
Service Charges Income		
sheltered service charges	169,063.20	169,063.20
Total support, service and contract income		£535,214.95
Expenditure		
Management support charges		
BASIC PAY -ADMIN /PROF STAFF	282,040.94	
OVERTIME -ADMIN /PROF STAFF	30,300.00	
EMPLOYERS PEN CONT - ADMIN/PRO	39,086.88	
NI -ADMIN /PROF STAFF	19,668.63	
EVENING MEETING ALLOWANCES	2,750.00	
CAR ALLOWS -ESS. USER LUMP SUM	1,060.00	
CAR ALLOWS -ESS.USER MILEAGE	2,600.00	
OFFICE EQUIPMENT <£5000	200.00	
MAINTENANCE CONTRACT	4,000.00	
TELEPHONES AND FAX	8,000.00	
RADIO EQUIPMENT	7,600.00	
COMMUNICATION LINES	5,080.00	
MISC FIXTURES AND FITTINGS	4,000.00	
HOSPITALITY	3,000.00	£409,386.45
Service Charge Costs		
GENERAL REPAIR/MAINT BUILDINGS	640.00	
GAS SUPPLY	10,000.00	
ELECTRICITY SUPPLY	46,280.00	

WATER SUPPLY	3,060.00	
CLEANING MATERIALS	2,500.00	
MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT	200.00	
OTHER MINOR SUPPLIES SERVICES	100.00	
LICENCES	2,500.00	
		65,280.00
Service Charges Support worker, vehicle and equipment		
BASIC PAY -ADMIN /PROF STAFF	18,936.96	
NI -ADMIN /PROF STAFF	1,403.94	
EMPLOYERS PEN CONT -	4,306.80	
FUEL	2,500.00	
OPER. LEASES -VEHS/M. PLANT	1,360.00	
OPERATIONAL EQUIPMENT < £5000	1,500.00	30,007.69
Cleaning contract		
Total cost for sheltered	51,222.15	51,222.15
Total Service		
Expenditure		£146,509.84
Total Costs		£555,896.29
TOTAL SURPLUS		£20,681.34

The £20,681.34 difference is met through the rental income, which is not included above and reflects the general housing management duties performed by the Scheme managers.

This illustrates the significant contribution the Supporting People Funding makes towards the provision of the sheltered housing service.

Sheltered Housing Support Worker Service

Between October 2008 and March 2009 a pilot Sheltered Housing Support Worker Service was set up, using the services of an Estate Services Worker. The main reason for this was because the sheltered housing schemes received limited support from the estate services team (the rota only provided for a one hour slot per scheme per week), and often larger or more time consuming projects required in sheltered housing were not able to be completed.

During the trial period the estate service worker managed to undertake many extra tasks that traditionally had either not been carried out or which external companies had been tasked with completing. This resulted in a saving to GCH and provided increased value for money

The impact on the sheltered schemes was also noticeable, both by staff and residents, with the outcome of greatly improved communal areas.

Analysis of time spent on each function during the pilot

Relief Scheme Manager	15%
Sickness	13%
GCH meetings / conference / events	6%
Normal estate workers duties	41.5%
Chargeable jobs	8%
Tenants jobs	3%
Leave	13.5%
	100%

Analysis of jobs that were completed, that would usually have been done by Morrison or other contractors

Job Description	Qty	Total Cost
Change light bulbs	12	£216
Replace handles	2	£4.88
Tree / bushes cutting	4	
Repair flooring	1	£18.80
Repair radiator / thermostat	7	£165.20
Drain / gutter cleaning	2	£43.23
Fence repairs	1	£14.25
Overflow / cistern repairs	3	£147.03
Painting communal areas	1	10.52
Fire door fixings / locks	6	£74.08
Repair / fix curtain rail	2	£48.52
Fix loose cables	1	£9.45
Fix letterbox	2	£30.08
TOTAL JOBS	44	£771.52

Analysis of jobs requested by tenants within their property

Job Description	Qty	Possible Cost*
Change Light bulbs	3	£15.00
Reset central heating timer	11	£55.00
Replace fuse	1	£5.00
Fill plaster holes	2	£16.00
Repair doors	4	£32.00
Fix fixtures / fittings	2	£16.00
TOTAL JOBS	23	£139.00

The figures above raise several points:

- During the pilot the worker saved the costs of 44 jobs that would normally have been completed by the repairs contractor.
- Sheltered Housing Schemes were noticeably improved with more time spent on each scheme carrying out any improvements needed.
- Tenant satisfaction was improved with a more rapid response for repairs that the worker was able to do.
- Job requests by tenants show a possible demand for a 'Handyman' service where small jobs could be carried out for a set fee.

(* example: £5 for first ½ hour or £8 per hour.)

Conclusion of pilot

As a result of the pilot the transfer of an Estate Service Worker to the Supported Housing Team has now taken place. This continues to work well and in addition to the tasks carried out during the pilot further savings have been made with the following functions now being carried out by the worker, whose job title has been changed to Sheltered Housing Support Worker:

- All communal bin areas are jet washed on a regular basis. This function was previously carried out by a private contractor at an annual cost of £1000
- All sheltered schemes communal pathways are jet washed annually to remove moss, dirt etc. generating a saving in the region of £300 per day for each scheme.

Current service issues and proposed service developments

Scheme Managers are provided with the same hours regardless of how many clients they are looking after and the level of dependency. Two different levels of services are provided linked to the type of property.

At the moment the distribution of housing management functions carried out by Scheme Managers is weighted more heavily with the full time managers with smaller schemes carrying a larger workload than the managers with larger schemes or additional Team Leading Duties

- Scheme Managers spend their time giving support to the customers on their scheme in line with the Supporting People requirements and carrying out housing management functions for the customers on their scheme and older people in the local community.

Over the next two years Gloucester City Homes (in anticipation that Supporting People funding will be cut further), needs to review distribution of the work load throughout the existing stock to even out the responsibility of each Scheme Manager across the City. Although this could have an effect on the ability for Scheme

Managers to carry out Housing functions as well as looking after 2 schemes. This option will have to be looked at if the level of funding received from Supporting People is not maintained, at least at the level received now.

If the four semi schemes are amalgamated into the four smaller schemes Nightingale House, Broom House, St James Close & Badger Vale Court it would even the number of dependant clients on each Scheme Manager and offer a two level service that could be distributed on needs basis rather than address.

As it would be foolish to have clients on a sheltered scheme that have no contact / support, as if anything happened, the whole scheme could be judged on that incident. The best way forward would be to offer a two level service based on need rather than address

Level one service

- 24 hour alarm service
- Out of hours call out service
- Weekly check
- Yearly support plan

Level Two Service

- 24 hour alarm service
- Out of hours call out service
- Daily check
- Six monthly support plan

Use of communal facilities would be available to all clients funded through service charges.

The extra hours this would release from the two part time Semi Scheme Managers could generate a saving and should be explored in more detail as part of the general review identified in future actions.

The schemes would then support around 50 clients each with Scheme Managers carrying out first contact sheets, on site lets and post tenancy checks on elderly designated properties could identify clients that have a genuine need for extra support in the community, and arrange for this support to be provided

GCH needs to be in a position where it has a clear vision of support needs for its tenants both in sheltered and semi sheltered schemes along with a robust community client base.

The introduction of the care village at St Oswald's, and the possible remodelling of Sherborne House away from older person needs could have a detrimental effect on meeting the demand for the sheltered stock. Although the entire stock profile of Gloucester City Homes properties is at the moment over 50% occupation by older / disabled tenants, the service focus should be to support the customers that need the service, and to aim to cover all needs in-house, wherever possible, rather than

making referrals to support agencies such as Guideposts and Futures at Knightstone.

Depending on funding available from Supporting People that will concentrate more on a need basis rather than a property based service, or even the quality of the service. GCH needs to be ready to renegotiate the contract with a clear picture of where the support need is, and try to secure additional funding to support additional clients on a floating support basis and manage all our tenants in house.

Existing Supporting People contracts have until March 2011 until they expire, during this time Gloucester City Homes needs to be looking at the feasibility of taking over the floating support contract for Gloucester and possibly Gloucestershire. This could provide valuable resources and further income source

Other funding streams for the sheltered schemes need to be sought to bring more functions into the communal facilities making the sheltered schemes the hub of the community for all older customers regardless of tenure.

Extra Sheltered Housing

Out of all the sheltered stock that GCH manage, none of the schemes naturally lend themselves to an "extra sheltered scheme" (those requiring more intensive support and care).

Extra Sheltered means that many extra features have to be available:

- All properties would have to be of disability standard
- Communal dining facilities
- Communal commercial kitchen for production of meals
- 24 hour care on site, with suitable accommodation for night staff
- Ideally all properties would be equipped / built in conjunction with the 'Fit for Purpose' document outlining all adaptations needed for sheltered schemes and elderly designed properties

For extra sheltered to work a mix of about 50% sheltered places (less intensive support) and 50% extra sheltered places is likely to be needed. Otherwise the scheme would be full of high dependency clients similar to a residential home, with residents that would be housebound, with little or no social interaction between clients, or any neighbour support, and not supporting the ethos of homes for life. If all customers met the extra criteria it would become a nursing / residential home by another name.

The ideal way to run a extra sheltered scheme would be to go into partnership with a care agency attached to a local residential / nursing home that could provide the care and catering needed for the site. They would have all the trained staff to enhance the service

An alternative would be to employ own catering staff that alongside providing meals on site, additionally meals could be provide to the community 'Meals on Wheels' as the standard in Gloucester of existing supplier is poor although the need is there

The 24-hour care on site could feed into the community and be part of the Out of Hours Duty Manager, thus freeing the day staff of this responsibility. This could also feed into the community provision of telecare alarms, as the main stumbling block at the moment is providing/ funding a 24-hour response service

The extra sheltered scheme would ideally provide a personal care room that could be used to bring services into the scheme for the clients along with the elderly / disabled from the local community.

In conjunction with a local Doctors surgery, Community Nurses could run clinics for diabetes, falls clinics, counselling etc. As well as chiropody, eye tests, hearing tests, hairdressing etc. The local Doctor could run a weekly surgery on the scheme, to allow the doctor to visit all his clients in that area at the same time. A charge for using these facilities could be levied of providers to cover the cost of ware and tare, heating, lighting and running costs

The scheme could also be used as a day centre to provide stimulation for the sheltered clients and the people from the community, thus creating extra income for the scheme.

If purpose built this could also provide intermediate / convalescing units for people in hospital that need something extra before returning to their own home. These could be funded on a permanent basis by PCT / Social Services providing a much needed service

Business Development and New Build

Gloucester City Homes continues to work with GCC and other Registered Providers to seek opportunities for new developments or partnership working.

Currently GCH has submitted proposals to build up to eight new homes for supported housing on land adjacent to St James Close. This is subject to competitive bids from other Registered Providers. The outcome will be known by the end of September 2009.

GCH has also met with Housing 21 and held tentative discussions in respect of a town centre regeneration opportunity and a registered care home, which could be purchased and remodelled and linked in with an existing sheltered housing scheme in respect of shared community facilities.

Future Actions

The current contract with Supporting People, which provides more than £329,000 of

funding expires in March 2011. The service is also due for a Supporting people inspection in March – May 2010. The intention is that the gold standard will be maintained, and that the service is in a position to both bid for new sheltered housing service provision opportunities in 2011, and that current service is restructured in such a way that it will be able to continue if funding is reduced or lost in 2011. This should also include a review of options for the structure of the company, and assess the potential for, and feasibility of, establishing a charitable subsidiary for the provision of supported housing services.

Current programmes of investment in the sheltered housing stock will continue in line with the decent homes and the capital investment programmes. The feasibility appraisal of Sherborne House will be completed by December 2009.

The outcome of the Changing demand project will be reviewed and consulted upon with residents, and this may lead to the decommissioning or de-designation of some properties solely for letting to older people.

In the light of competition from other providers and to ensure that GCH sheltered housing schemes are fully let, that a rolling marketing and promotional campaign of the benefits and services provided within sheltered housing is established. It is noted that a number of housing organisations have recently re-branded their sheltered housing as Retirement Housing, this often reflects the mixed tenure nature of some schemes, but there may be some merit in considering whether such re-branding will be beneficial in attracting new tenants in the future, particularly if supporting people funding is significantly reduced, as there will be a need to let properties to older people with independent financial means.

Summary of key actions:

- **Preparation for the Supporting People inspection** in March – May 2010
 - Establish project team
 - Review revised quality assurance framework and update policies and procedures. Complete December 2009.
 - Raise awareness across GCH and partners to ensure full support
- **Lobby Supporting People Partnership** to preserve level of investment in sheltered housing post 2011
- **Review and implement revised and updated marketing information** for the service. Assess possible service re-branding. Complete by October 2009.
- **Reduce level of dependence upon Supporting People funding** without reducing the service currently provided for sheltered housing tenants
 - Review operating costs of service and alignment of tasks between housing management and support. Complete during 2009/10
 - Carry out a detailed appraisal of the current schemes as part of the changing demand project in terms of their individual long-term viability for letting to the same customer group. Complete by end of 2009/10
 - Review and consult upon the structure of the service with staff and tenants. During 2010/11
- **Seek opportunity to expand services** provided, targeting the following areas:

- Expand the community hub. Ongoing monitoring of opportunities for funding.
- Research and prepare business case for development of a Handy person service. Complete by March 2010
- Bid for floating support contracts. During 2010/11.
- Explore potential of setting up a charitable company for the provision of supported housing services. July 2010.
- Develop closer links with Care & repair and expand services to the private sector. Ongoing development, with service agreement in place by end of 2010.
- Explore opportunities to work with other providers to enhance services provided from existing schemes or to expand schemes in management, in particular to add an extra care facility to the property and service portfolio. Ongoing partnership development.

PART THREE - THE LIFE LINK SERVICE

Gloucester City Homes provides a life link service for any one of any age who would like the peace of mind and security offered by being linked to a contact support centre at all times. Life link is a vital resource for older or vulnerable people wishing to maintain their independence or for victims of hate crime or harassment, and is a core aspect of enabling people to remain successfully in their own home.

In 2008 GCH appointed Herefordshire Housing as the contact centre provider on a five year contract following a joint procurement with Stroud Borough Council, that resulted in significant savings being made.

GCH has a contract with the City Council to provide alarms into the private sector. Currently there are 870 individual alarms, and 1000 social housing properties connected to the alarm centre at Herefordshire Housing. The options available for life link users are to purchase, rent or apply for a donated alarm. In addition to providing alarms the team also installs key safes. It should be noted that dispersed alarms are not eligible in Gloucestershire for funding through Supporting People.

Currently additional funding is being sought from GCC to upgrade existing alarms that are not BT21 compliant and therefore not able to offer full facilities that can be available through the HH call centre.

Alarms are either hard-wired into a property such as at a sheltered housing scheme, or free standing as an independent (dispersed) alarm operated through a telephone line and is activated by pushing a contact button on a pendant or pull cord. Currently the system is a voice activated response, but does have the potential to be expanded into the rapidly growing personal support system of Telecare (also known as Assistive Technology), that enables many aspects of a vulnerable person's life to be monitored and supported such as movement sensors, medication reminders and health monitors.

In 2007 GCH participated in a pilot project to install Telecare in Stroud and Gloucester City, which was successful and led to a County-wide contract being set up by Supporting People in conjunction with the PCT, for which GCH made a bid that was unsuccessful. This programme of work has not yet been implemented and GCH will continue to monitor the situation in case the opportunity to submit another bid becomes available.

Future actions

GCH will continue to maintain an awareness of developments in the Telecare field and seek opportunities to provide more people with the Life link service across all tenures.

The key targets for this service area are:

- Set targets for increasing take up of service within the City and actively

- promote the service. By December 2009
- Secure the additional funding from GCC to upgrade failing alarm systems. By October 2009
 - Review the contract and funding arrangements for the service with GCC by March 2010
 - Continue to work with Supporting People and the PCT for opportunities to provide a service for the implementation of Telecare within the City and the County. Ongoing monitoring
 - Develop and maintain links with Care and Repair to access new customers. Ongoing

PART FOUR - SUPPORT TO GENERAL NEEDS VULNERABLE TENANTS

A number of GCH tenants require additional support to help them to maintain their tenancy. This is often specialist support that is more intensive in nature than that which could be provided by a Neighbourhood Officer as part of the normal housing management. At various times GCH will identify with tenants where this additional support will be beneficial and will then make contact with the Supporting People contracted provider for this support to be provided on a floating basis. This is known as floating support because this is flexible support provided to individual tenants based upon their particular needs, which are identified in consultation and agreement with the recipient of the support, and will be for varying lengths of time. This is different to property based support that is provided in specialist supported housing schemes, whereby the support is provided as an essential and non negotiable part of the residence in the scheme.

Following the audit commission inspection recommendations in 2006, a specialist officer was appointed in March 2008 by GCH to co-ordinate referrals and monitor the effectiveness of the service provided by the support agencies to all tenants. This has enabled greater accountability by the support providers, and has also evidenced the need for improved resources for the project, as demand exceeds the time available. Representations are made regularly for increased provision however availability is restricted by the availability of funding.

Future Actions

Research and prepare a business case for the direct provision of floating support services in readiness for the likely opportunity to bid for this contract in 2011.
Complete by July 2010.

PART FIVE - SERVICES FOR HOMELESS FAMILIES

GCH holds a contract with the City Council for the provision of accommodation for homeless families. This consists of a shared facility hostel for homeless families at Caridas House, which was opened in March 2009, and six self contained properties at Moor Street, the last of which is in now the process of being returned to general needs housing to be replaced by six units of dispersed accommodation across the City following complaints from local residents around Moor Street.

Caridas House has recently been transferred into the Housing Revenue Account, and will now be subject to decent homes programme. A feasibility appraisal has been commissioned for conversion into self contained units, whilst maintaining its use as a facility for homeless families.

GCH has submitted a bid to the Supporting People Partnership to provide a full time support worker for the homeless families housed with GCH on a temporary basis to enable them to work towards resolving their problems and help them move on to more settled accommodation, and if necessary, support them in the transfer to another support worker through the floating support contract.

GCH is also pursuing opportunities to work with private owners to either lease or provide management services to enable their homes to be used to meet the needs of homeless families, either on the same short stay basis as Caridas where the property is suitable for such a use, or for longer term move-on accommodation from the hostel.

Future actions

- Maintain a successful hostel project. Ongoing.
- Complete feasibility assessment of the conversion of Caridas House into self-contained units. Complete by December 2009.
- Continue to work closely with housing options to support their work with homeless families. Ongoing.
- Promote interest in managing properties for private owners. Ongoing.

PART SIX - STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

A variety of key stakeholders have helped to develop this strategy and action plan including:

- Gloucestershire County Council (Supporting People Partnership, Social services and Occupational Therapy)
- Gloucester City Council (Housing options and Housing Strategy and Enabling Team)
- Sheltered Action Group (Residents)
- Gloucester City Homes staff
- Gloucestershire Primary Care Trust

This strategy identifies a range of service reviews that need to be carried out, which will be subject to further consultation on an individual basis.

The nature of this strategy is such however that there is a need to maintain regular contact with all stakeholders and to consult on a routine basis as to the effectiveness and scope for improvement in the work carried out by Gloucester City Homes.

PART SEVEN - SUMMARY OF SERVICE IMPROVEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The individual future actions are summarised under each section of this strategy. The recently approved Business Development strategy summarises the following key objectives in respect of supported housing:

1. To continue to broaden GCH's offering of housing related support services, linked to the changing commissioning environment, aiming to be a hub provider of services both for existing customers and for other people with support needs in the wider community
2. Linked to pursuing the objectives above, GCH will work with service commissioners and support/care providers to identify the potential to better utilise some existing properties managed by GCH for people with support needs. It is intended that this should link to accessing opportunities to develop and/or manage additional properties providing supported housing where other organisations provide specialised services to residents.
3. GCH will continue to pursue other opportunities to extend its portfolio of support services in line with the Supported Housing Strategy and building on some of its pioneering work, for example the piloting of Telecare installations with Stroud District Council.
4. GCH will seek to build upon the early success of Caridas House and expand the accommodation portfolio and services for homeless families
5. GCH will develop a programme of remodelling schemes with shared facilities in line with our asset investment strategy to ensure all the supported housing schemes within the HRA are self-contained

PART EIGHT - RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

There are a number of resource implications in the identified actions within this strategy.

The major concern that has been highlighted throughout is the potential threat to the supporting people funding when the current contract expires in 2011. This strategy details the reviews of the sheltered housing service which are required to ensure the costs of the service are fully understood, that the service provides value for money and to explore alternative ways of financing the service without a loss of the benefits for tenants. The need to retain the gold standard in next years Supporting People assessment is absolutely vital, and sufficient resources need to be made available to support the team in this work.

Currently there is no capacity in terms of staff time or funding to carry out the following activities identified in this strategy identified as key tasks in this current financial year:

- Feasibility assessment of Sherborne House. Estimated costs £6,000
- Detailed strategic appraisal of the sheltered housing schemes and their fitness for purpose to meet the aspirations of future residents. Estimated costs £9,000

Both of these are important activities and it is advisable that these are completed this financial year. Consideration will be given to capacity to fund these as part of the half-year budget review.

In addition there are service improvement proposals, which will be included in revenue growth bids for 2010/11 and include;

- Appraisal of establishing a charitable subsidiary for the provision of supported housing services.
- Total scheme refurbishment of all furniture and soft furnishings every ten years.
- Establishing a rolling programme for the installation of visual door entry systems in sheltered housing schemes

There are also capital implications that will arise from the sheltered housing strategic appraisal and also for the remodelling of Sherborne House and Caridas House to provide self-contained accommodation. This is work outside of the decent homes programme, and is likely to be in the region of £500,000 - £750,000 for both schemes. This will require detailed assessment and planning for, including bidding for any available funding.

PART NINE - KEY MILESTONES 2009 –2014

Feasibility studies of Sherborne House and Caridas House	December 2009
Complete sheltered housing schemes appraisal	March 2010
Supporting People Inspection	March –May 2010
Commence remodelling of Sherborne and Caridas	June 2010
Consultation on sheltered housing service	July – October 2010
Bid for supporting people contracts	September 2010
Implement sheltered housing investment programme	November 2010
Prepare for new SP contracts	January 2011
Complete sheltered housing programme	April 2015