

ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

PLANNING, LAND ASSEMBLY AND DELIVERY AT SCALE MAKING THE BUSINESS CASE FOR INDEPENDENT LIVING FOR OLDER PEOPLE

Essex County Council (ECC) is looking to invest significantly to transform the provision of accommodation for its older citizens. It wants to have a better range of housing options available for older people across Essex. In particular, its focus has been based on a view that older people with a care need, and their support networks, should benefit from:

- increased independence
- aspirational choices
- clearly understanding the options available to them
- peace of mind
- remaining living within their existing communities.

The council identified that there was a significant underprovision in the county of housing options for older people, specifically housing where care could be an integral part of the offer. In response, the Independent Living programme was established in Autumn 2014 to increase the pace and quantity of Independent Living units being delivered across Essex.

Led by ECC staff, the programme team has worked closely with all twelve district councils in Essex and developers/providers from all sectors to understand the barriers to delivery and systematically remove them. The council is also working with the Local Economic Partnership (LEP) and the NHS in its role of brokering land assembly of potential sites for Independent Living.

In July 2015 ECC endorsed capital investment of circa £27 million with enabling revenue investment to facilitate the delivery of 1,800 units of Independent Living over a five year period to 2020.

Housing and older people context

To establish demand for Independent Living accommodation a demand analysis was undertaken, and subsequently updated by ECC's insight and analysis team. The analysis demonstrated the varying needs of each district. This was developed as a county 'model' but disaggregated by district council area to ensure it was meaningful and sensitive to local differences. This was important in establishing an agreed shared evidence base between ECC and all 12 district councils.

A further update of the population data was applied and this provides the evidence base for Independent Living policy inclusion into district Local Plans. The demand data is calculated based on the population projections which came out in June 2016, growth rates between 2015 to 2020 and the eligible clients receiving social care.

As a result of this demand analysis an Independent Living Programme for Older People Position Statement was published in October 2016 showing demand by tenure type and district. The council has a target of 1,800 units of Independent Living over five years, 43 per cent for rent and 57 per cent for ownership.



Independent living at Rosebank Park

Independent Living is a programme that is designed to provide housing for people over the age of 55 whose current home no longer meets their needs. The Independent Living housing model has the following features:

- attractive, self-contained housing in a mixture of one and two bed apartments
- 24/7 care and support should be based on the site
- scheme size typically from 60 to 300 units
- all units are intended to be designed to incorporate the Lifetime Homes design criteria
- ideally schemes would be in a large town or large village in close proximity to public transport links to access a larger urban centre
- broadly, an even balance of low or no care need (0 – nine hours/week), medium care need (10 – 15 hours/week) and high care need (15 plus hours/week) should be maintained
- care delivered through direct payments with choice.

The size and location of Independent Living communities is determined by site availability and local demand. Schemes are not generally smaller than 60 units for reasons of affordability and the ability to create and support an active community.

The model of Independent Living is not intended to be overly prescriptive; schemes can include a variety of features depending on the scale, location and stated purpose of individual developments.

Independent Living schemes may become a focal point for community health services, outreach services and intermediate/reablement care where this is deemed appropriate for the locality.

Independent Living communities are intended to offer a full range of tenures, in order to appeal to the high number of older owner occupiers in Essex, and also to meet the needs of those who need or prefer to rent. Tenure mix is dependent on development viability, local planning requirements and other factors such as whether the scheme has received any grant funding from ECC.

How is it innovative? The council's approach

Essex is one of the largest two-tier councils in England. ECC has worked in collaboration with the 12 district councils in Essex in relation to the Independent Living programme. This has included an agreed method for determining demand at a district level, site availability and location and producing a joint Independent Living for Older People planning policy position statement to be used by each district council planning departments.

This is now being included in local plans by district councils to ensure that all plans refer to Independent Living, local demand and a consistent approach to development is applied across Essex. All planning applications to date for Independent Living have been approved.

The council has developed a robust financial model and business case to justify capital and revenue investment in the Independent Living programme. Analysis was undertaken of the profile of council social care service users entering registered care services and the cost of this to the council.

This identified that many service users were entering registered care sooner than was necessary due to the lack of availability of housing based alternatives. From this the council identified that the priority 'cohort' of its service users were those older people already receiving a package of domiciliary care in their existing home of between six to 15 hours per week, for instance these people were identified as being at risk of 'early' entry to registered care.



Beaumont House, Walton



Independent living at Rosebank Park

The programme level business case is based on delivering 1,800 units of Independent Living. The financial and business case assumptions included in summary:

- the minimum size of an Independent Living scheme needed to be 60 units
- people living in a scheme would have care needs as follows:
 - one third – up to 10 hours of care per week
 - one third – up to 15 hours of care per week
 - one third – over 15 hours of care per week
- seventy per cent of the older people moving to Independent Living would be people at risk of moving to registered care
- the other 30 per cent of people would those identified as having lower care needs currently and still managing in their current home
- the cost model for domiciliary care at Independent Living schemes is based on existing rates paid for domiciliary care by the council
- the predicted cost difference between the average cost of registered care and the existing costs of those receiving domiciliary care at home is compared to the cost of care in Independent Living based on the assumed care bands
- the county wide financial case projects a net saving to the council of approximately £3,900 per person per annum compared with alternative options.



Aggregating the projected savings in care costs across the programme has enabled the council to justify the investment of capital funding and land assets owned by the council to support delivery of the programme.

The projected savings in care costs has resulted the council agreeing to an investment of £27 million of capital funding over five years. The average subsidy for each affordable unit is around £35,000. No subsidy is assumed for ownership units.

The council has also made available sites in its ownership where they have been identified as surplus to requirement and is also brokering land assembly arrangements across Essex to support delivery.

The delivery model is dependent on source of land:

- the capital (grant) funding model supports delivery of schemes being brought forward by developers/ providers on land that they have sourced
- a developer/ provider framework is used to efficiently appoint developers/providers to take forward schemes on land owned by the public sector.

The council treats Independent Living corporately as a major change programme. Dedicated staff resources have been allocated to support delivery of the programme.

Outcomes

At September 2016 there are 22 schemes in the Independent Living Programme. To date:

- scheme in Chelmsford opened in 2016
- scheme in Harwich opened January 2017
- scheme in Walton opened in July 2017
- onsite at a scheme in Saffron Walden
- planning achieved or submitted for six more schemes
- pipeline of 1,400 units.

The pipeline programme includes a diversity of types of Independent Living schemes including three retirement villages which will contain approximately 250 units each.

Each scheme delivered is reviewed to identify lessons learned. The review of the first scheme opened in 2016 identified that the assumed care 'bandings' were accurate and reflected the profile of older people living in the scheme, the level of projected care savings had been accurate and the business case for the scheme reflected the overall countywide financial model.

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