

23 March 2009

Redditch Borough Council: *Special Needs Tenancy Officer and Home Support Move On Scheme*

Summary of policy/project

Helping people to move home rather than having to duplicate costly facilities for people with special needs— thus helping people off the waiting list for social housing, and diverting financial resources to help other residents in the area

Description

The Council owns its own housing of 6,080 properties as the demand for housing outweighs the supply with 3,000 people on the Council's waiting list; we had to look at ways of making best use of the Council's stock. Through our equipment and adaptation work we recognised that properties were being adapted that later required further larger adaptations but were not necessarily enhancing or meeting the entire needs of the family. Our Tenancy Officers would be aware of families that were requesting stair lifts and walk in showers through the Occupational Health Therapist. However the Occupational Therapist's role was only to assess the health needs of the person to help them remain in their property. The Tenancy Officers tried to assist with moving tenants when they were aware of these situations but due to work loads and no funding to help with the moves there were very few moves taking place. Properties were being adapted with, for instance, through ceiling stair lifts, when the person eventually did not require the property we were finding it hard to re-let and in some cases were having to take out the equipment which was not suitable to use in other properties or we were

not able to store the equipment until it was needed.

Has the idea worked elsewhere?

I am aware that since Redditch has promoted this work to all our partners across the County, they have now developed a similar position which will work across the County to try and release up under occupied accommodation.

What problems does the policy/project solve?

Through the ability to move people rather than install very costly adaptations we have been able to assist far more families off the Council's waiting list. The costs of the adaptations in these properties would have exceeded £100,000 and therefore we have been able to use this money to carry out smaller works for those families not wishing to move or whose current accommodation is easily adapted to meet their needs.

What were the difficulties of implementation?

The introduction of a second Special Needs Tenancy Officer formed part of a Service review therefore this took time to achieve.

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What is the cost of implementation?

The introduction of this post did not incur costs as we converted an existing Tenancy Officer post. This post holder has now shared their experiences and developed the post further.

Members agreed a £10K budget to assist Officers with moving people who are unable to move financially or who need help and assistance to do so. The budget is used to provide the cost of a weeks rent, carpets, curtains, removal costs etc.

What is the evidence of success?

In 18 months we have freed up fifty properties, forty of which are family sized accommodation. Those people who have been re-housed have moved into more suitable accommodation being either bungalows or ground floor accommodation.

Would this work in other Councils?

I cannot see any reason for this post not working in all Local Authorities or Housing Associations, as I believe as a housing provider, and the lack of housing available all landlords should be making the best use of their accommodation to try and

meet the ever increasing demands on the service and meeting our customers needs.

What advice would you give any Councils wishing to adopt this idea?

Due to the success of the outcomes the post has bought, we have now introduced a second Special Needs Tenancy Officer.

This was a very easy project to commence and meets the needs of a lot of people; those requiring family accommodation, those whose housing needs are not currently being met in their existing accommodation and enables people to live independently.

I would expect that officers will already have highlighted to their organisation that they are coming up against similar issues with people living in inappropriate accommodation. Just talking to the staff about how this can be overcome will produce lots of good ideas, then nominate an officer to lead on this.

The budget agreed by Members of £10,000 has helped to provide assistance and make the moves take place quicker. Before we had this money staff were not able to spend the length of time with a tenant as they do now and this is important if you want to build up a relationship with a tenant

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and help them move, which sometimes can be traumatic for people especially if they are elderly.

For more information

For more information on this submission contact Liz Tompkin, Head of Housing and Community Services at Redditch Borough Council

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