Annex 1

Kingston Residents’ Scrutiny Panel

Keeping an eye on housing

Sheltered Housing Investigation

August 2017
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*These appendices are available upon request from Robert Johnson, RBK Council.*
INTRODUCTION

The Kingston Residents Scrutiny Panel, KRiSP, is an autonomous Panel of council tenants and leaseholders set up by the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Council, in conjunction with the Kingston Federation of Residents. The role of KRiSP is to investigate and review the Council’s housing services and to propose improvements that will be of benefit to all residents. KRiSP is central to the Council’s ‘Resident Involvement Framework’ and has a commitment to co-regulation. It was formed in October 2013 and is currently composed of 9 tenants and leaseholders.

The role of KRiSP is to carry out service investigations and report on them to the Council. This is KRiSP’s fifth investigation and the area of Sheltered Housing was chosen.

The KRiSP Investigation Panel comprised Raewyn Hammond, Geof Yates, Bruce Parker, Mohammed Ali, David Miller, and Mary Parmar.

Owing to the volume of work being undertaken for this review the other members of KRiSP offered their assistance and all contributed to the production of the final report.

The Panel was supported by Theresa Mayers and Robert Johnson from the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames Council and independent mentoring support from Phil Morgan. The investigation panel would like to thank all the members of staff and residents who gave up their time freely to support this investigation.

●●●
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The enforced changes to the Warden Service in 2014/15 had a profound effect on staff and residents alike. It has left a legacy of frustration and lack of purpose that needs to be addressed. This review sets out some individual recommendations that help to identify areas for improvement and to address accountability. KRiSP is particularly interested in restating the services available to residents and using a range of Key Performance Indicators to improve accountability of the service. Also of concern to KRiSP members were the issues raised about Fire Safety, Safeguarding, and general Health & Safety.

METHODOLOGY
The Panel agreed the following four objectives:

1. Value for Money of service.
2. Communication and Involvement of Sheltered Housing residents.
3. Services provided to Sheltered Housing residents.
4. Eligibility for Sheltered Housing.

The Panel carried out the following tasks:

Desk Top Review:

The Desk Top Review considered 73 different items, at least one of which had a further 23 items, including:

- Presentations:
  - Joyce Smith, Scheme Manager
  - Mo Patel, Lead Officer, Housing Support Team
- Procedures
- List of wardens and schemes
- New Tenancy Choice leaflet
- Sheltered Housing News
- Correspondence following restructure of service
- Star Survey for older people 2016
- HouseMark Benchmarking Review
- New Tenant Pack
- RBK Website.

London Boroughs:

13 London Boroughs websites were investigated.

Interviews were also held with:

- Andrew Stone, Care Line Co-ordinator, Croydon Council
- Kim Mitchell, Head of Specialist Services and James Montgomery-Heffernan, Old Peoples and Assistive Technology Manager, Hounslow Council
- Dawn Eustace, Head of Neighbourhood (Income and Sustainment) and Abou Gayle, Tenancy Sustainment Manager, Sutton Council.

In addition Hounslow Council gave further written information.
Work Shadowing:

- Rebecca Johnston
- Chris Egan.

Staff Interviews:

- Loraine Shale, Lead Officer OVP – Sheltered Housing
- Joyce Smith, Team Leader – Sheltered Housing
- Tulloch Kempe, Staywell
- Neuza Castro, Scheme Manager
- Jayme Barnes, Scheme Manager
- Mo Patel, OVP Support Services Manager
- Katy Gout, OVP Support
- Adam Phippen, OVP Support Team
- Iona McConnell, Group Manager Landlord Services.

An interview was requested with the Finance Department. However, they declined to be interviewed. Iona McConnell supplied some information given to her by Finance as this report was being prepared.

Resident engagement:

Sheltered Housing Survey (66 responses)

Follow up phone calls and emails were made to 26 residents, 14 of whom gave answers: some of these were followed up with interviews including

- Residents of Gooding Close
- Residents of Lovekyn Close.

Staywell Befriending and Social Engagement Project Plan

FINDINGS

INCIDENT

1. During the Investigation a KRiSP member came across a situation involving a 93-year-old neighbour in a predominantly sheltered block. Following a bad fall and spending four weeks in St. George’s Trauma Unit the neighbour was discharged and the KRiSP member spoke with a member of staff about her situation, including the need for a commode. The member of staff said that
they had already spoken to the resident about the commode, but had done nothing about it, and that it would take OVP at least 4-5 days to deliver so could the KRiSP member do it. Following the intervention of the KRiSP member with Adult and Social Care the commode was delivered at 10am the following day.

2. The member of staff concerned did promise to get a pendant for the neighbour. However, a week later the neighbour had another fall and the member of staff said the pendant had been forgotten and there were no spare pendants. The pendant arrived 12 days after it was originally promised.

3. This incident was reported to Iona McConnell, Group Manager, Landlord Services. Joyce Smith, Team Leader, Sheltered Housing, visited the neighbour, with the KRiSP member present, and an apology given. However, there are issues concerning the response on both the commode and pendant regarding the duty of care of Kingston Council to its residents. A fuller outline of the incident is given at Appendix 1 (Incident Report).

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

4. KRiSP is pleased to report that there is an extensive range of procedures in place, dated, up to date, and with review dates. This has been an area of concern on previous investigations.

5. However, there is no over-arching Sheltered Housing Policy in place. This highlights a concern throughout this report about clarity of the objectives of the Council's approach to sheltered housing.

ORGANISATION

6. Kingston, like other London boroughs, used to have a resident warden service and changed this during 2014/15. This was reflected in responses by other London boroughs. Such changes are difficult for staff and residents alike. Staff reported that residents had difficulties in understanding and coming to terms with the changes. There were residents who claimed that there had been no consultation or meetings about the changes, but others had attended meetings. Other London boroughs have also reported resistance, although they seemed to have been more able to move on than Kingston. Instead, both staff and residents in Kingston seem to lack clarity about purpose, roles and services.
7. The Council has two teams working with sheltered housing: the Scheme Managers and the Older Vulnerable People (OVP) service. These have different forms of funding from Housing and Adult Social Care respectively.

8. There appears to be some legacy of issues between the two teams although KRiSP is pleased to note that on each side there is both awareness of the legacy and a desire to work more closely together, including holding liaison meetings (that do not take place at present) and developing a Service Level Agreement approach.

9. Interestingly, other London boroughs also had the experience of having to create two teams following similar changes in funding. They had subsequently taken the view to recombine the two teams into one and had successfully managed the finances.

10. There was also a considerable appetite from Scheme Managers for a review of their job title.

SERVICES

11. There is the offer of weekly checks for all Sheltered Housing residents, with the ability of residents to opt out. The desktop review showed that this was covered in Sheltered Housing News but not clearly in any policy and Scheme Managers confirmed that there were weekly checks.

12. The STAR survey showed 72% satisfaction with frequency of contact, down from 85% in 2012, and well below the benchmark of 87%. The resident survey showed about 50% of respondents did not receive a visit or call within the past week.

13. Visits to other London boroughs showed a range of approaches. One had a gold/silver/bronze service alongside well-being plans and a Link-line service. Another visited only the most vulnerable, with phone calls for some others and the majority relying on the pendant and pull cord. A third had different levels of checks with high (daily), medium (3/week) and low (weekly).

14. These checks are supported by the Tunstall alarm system. However the investigation showed issues for Scheme Managers with the system, which would prevent its effective operation. Residents also fed back uncertainty about the operation of the system.
15. Throughout KRISP’s investigation there was a lack of clarity both around the service offered to residents, and who does what. Only 18/62 survey respondents said they were aware of the services offered and responses on what services were offered were almost exclusively limited to one service, at the expense of the services offered by OVP.

16. There is an on-line welcome pack. However, it still references changes in the service from 2014/15 that are no longer relevant to new residents, and would need to include clear descriptions of the service offered to residents.

FIRE SAFETY

17. One of the responsibilities of Scheme Managers is around fire safety checks. These should take place weekly. However, one viewing of a fire safety test showed that two out of three fire safety doors had flat batteries and did not work effectively. It was only due to the KRISP members attending that this was spotted. Concerns¹ over defective fire doors have been raised following the Grenfell Tower fire. There are also potential issues around where leaseholders have, unwittingly, replaced fire doors, not informed the Council, and where previous advice may now be out of date.

18. On neither occasion witnessed were residents informed of an impending fire alarm test.

19. There is only one KPI in place – turnaround time for voids. There have been STAR surveys of residents in 2012 and 2016, with the latter showing reduced satisfaction levels and all scores below (and in some case well below) benchmark scores. Only one area of rents is benchmarked. The current approach to KPIs is under-developed.

20. OVP does monitor individual support plans through a resident star rating system (although KRiSP is not aware of the scores) and plan to expand the rating approach for other services.

21. Likewise, Value for Money is not easily explained (although our lack of access to Finance obviously makes this more difficult). Explanations include: belief; unspecified savings from reduced hospital admissions and GP visits; preventing homelessness, and comparison of costs with the private rented sector. One member of staff suggested that the service could not, at the moment, demonstrate VFM. Only 40% of survey respondents regarded the service as VFM.

IN VolVEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

22. Sheltered Housing News (SHN) is the main form of communication with residents. SHN is distributed 6 monthly and includes the rota of Scheme Managers. Scheme Managers hand-deliver these.

23. Resident feedback is mixed. Residents fed back that they were not impressed with the content and SHN’s layout and that 50% of content is about staff rotation. On review, KRiSP members thought the information was fine, but felt that the production on poor quality paper undermined the content. This might reflect the view of residents that 1 in 4 survey respondents did not remember receiving a copy.

24. There is an appetite for activities based in the schemes from both staff and residents. Other London boroughs have impressive approaches to daily and outreach activities whilst only 8/57 survey respondents felt that the current activities met their needs.

25. Kingston’s approach is through Staywell (formerly Kingston Age Concern), who are currently offering taster sessions with a view to charging residents for future activities. Scheme Managers are also a driver for the activities that do take place.
26. There appears to be no awareness of how Pinnacle might help, or what other resources might exist.

27. KRiSP welcomed the use of interpreters and sign language during interviews. It was not obvious what monitoring there was of the profile of current residents.

28. There are currently some Residents’ Associations in place, although the Sheltered Housing Forum has ceased to exist (despite some effort by staff). There were a range of suggestions for improving involvement. These included: greater use of IT (such as WhatsApp and SMS messaging; annual lounge meetings; coffee mornings, and scheme meetings. Staywell is also in the process of recruiting Resident Champions for each scheme.

29. Residents showed little appetite for electronic communication.

30. There are notice boards at schemes, mostly with both ‘open’ and ‘closed’ boards. The ‘closed’ ones are useful but can be out of date with 18/51 survey respondents and staff saying they were not updated regularly. Keys for these are held by Estate Managers. One suggestion was that the closed boards have keys held with Scheme Managers and OVP and open boards are for tenants. This reflects experience in other London boroughs. This would support the role of staff in the schemes.

**LEASEHOLDERS**

31. KRiSP interviewed leaseholders, some of whom fed back that following a successful challenge to the Council they were barred from using the communal washing facilities that they previously had used, and their flats did not have facilities. They also raised concerns about the transparency of service charges, an issue raised previously by KRiSP in its review on Service Charges, and currently unresolved. This could have been an area of discussion with Finance who declined to be interviewed.

32. There was concern that, with the sale of leases, the Council was unaware of who actually owned individual flats.

**OTHER**

33. KRiSP noted the future adverse impact of Welfare Reform on the future for sheltered schemes.
34. KRiSP also noted the increased use of mobility scooters in schemes and resident interest in having somewhere to park and charge scooters. LB Hounslow had a scooter centre in each scheme.

35. KRiSP also noted excessively high heating in more than one scheme and that Scheme Managers did not have the means to control this centrally.
Below is the complete list of recommendations made following the Panel's investigation. The reasons for these recommendations and findings behind these are detailed in the *Findings and Recommendations* section of this report.

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<th>#</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Recommendation</th>
<th>Paragraph / Appendix</th>
<th>Recommendation type</th>
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<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Incident</td>
<td>That Scheme Managers respond in a professional and timely manner to all Safeguarding incidents in accordance with the Care Act 2014 and that these are reported and monitored by Kingston Council. (This should include an investigation into the incident reported).</td>
<td>1-3, Appendix 1</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Incident</td>
<td>That there is a supply of spare pendants to avoid undue delays where there would be Safeguarding issues for residents in not having a pendant.</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Service Improvement</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Organisation and Incident</td>
<td>That a Service Level Agreement (SLA) is put in place between the two teams working with Sheltered Housing, setting out clearly the roles of both teams and how they will liaise with each other. That irrespective of there being two teams there is a cultural commitment to one service.</td>
<td>1, 7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Organisation</td>
<td>That the role and title of the Scheme Manager be reviewed, and outcome reported to residents.</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Service Improvement</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Welfare checks</td>
<td>That the Sheltered Housing Service review its approach to welfare checks, (taking into account resident views, statutory responsibilities, examples from elsewhere, and available funding) and that Scheme Managers are trained on operation of the Tunstall system, to include</td>
<td>11, 12, 13, 14, &amp; 16</td>
<td>Service Improvement &amp; Accountability</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td><strong>Service</strong></td>
<td>That there be a clear restatement of what the Sheltered Housing service provides for residents. This should be shared with residents, along with contact details for raising issues, and to be included in an updated Welcome Pack.</td>
<td>5 &amp; 15, 16</td>
<td>Accountability &amp; Service Improvement</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td><strong>Fire Safety</strong></td>
<td>That the approach to Fire Safety is reviewed and updated, in line with current legislation, including Fire Alarms, Heat or Smoke detectors, and CO detectors, with appropriate written and aural advice to residents.</td>
<td>16, 17 &amp; 18</td>
<td>Service Improvement</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td><strong>Key Performance Indicators</strong></td>
<td>That KPI (Key Performance Indicator) measures are developed for the service, including resident feedback, and that these are monitored and reported to residents. These should be captured in an annual report that would also show Value for Money of the service.</td>
<td>19, 20 &amp; 21</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td><strong>Involvement and Communication</strong></td>
<td>That there is a mapping exercise of communication and involvement resources available to Sheltered Housing schemes (to include Pinnacle). Sheltered Housing News be produced with the help of Kingston’s communication team, and that keys to locked noticeboards are held by relevant scheme managers and OVP to keep information fresh and appealing.</td>
<td>22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, &amp; 30.</td>
<td>Service Improvement</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td><strong>Mobility</strong></td>
<td>That a review of demand for and provision of scooter parking (or other mobility aid) be considered and reported to residents.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>Service Improvement</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Mobility Vehicles and Charging Facilities Takes Place.</td>
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<td><strong>Service Charges</strong></td>
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<td>That the previous KRISP recommendation on Service Charges (2015) be implemented: “<strong>RBKs approach should be based on providing all relevant information including a breakdown of all charges for residents and for setting up a consultative process for deciding on Service Charges and also for setting service standards</strong>”</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>Accountability</td>
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LEARNING POINTS

Learning Points

During this investigation a number of learning points have been identified for both KRiSP and a variety of Council officers.

KRiSP

KRiSP has become aware of the need for it to take positive action to ensure that tasks undertaken by members during an Investigation are recorded within three days and to this end any future Investigation Timetable will include a completion/cut-off date for delivery of reports.

Owing to unforeseen circumstances it became apparent to the Investigation Panel of the need to have a direct line of succession from the member chairing the Investigation. Accordingly in future, once the Chair of KRiSP has nominated the members for the next investigation, not only will they appoint their own lead member but they will also select a deputy able to assume leadership of the Investigation if required.

KINGSTON COUNCIL

Of concern to KRiSP and something that Senior Management may want to address was the unwillingness of members of the Finance Department to meet with KRiSP and its inability to provide even the most basic information to enable us to include its response into our final report. This was especially noticeable due to other housing authorities that provided us (as they do to their own tenants) with the costings, which we were unable to ascertain from our own Council until the intervention of the Group Manager for Housing Services. If the information requested is unavailable to KRiSP it may require someone in the future to implement a Freedom of Information request, which really should not be necessary if KRiSP’s Terms of Reference are respected.

Following on from this apparent lack of awareness of KRiSP and its remit, we were disappointed at staff reaction within Sheltered Housing at the early stages of our Investigation. There appeared to be confusion as to who and what KRiSP is, what we are attempting to achieve, and, in a couple of cases, genuine fear of KRiSP and its members, something that we would never wish to engender. Owing to recent changes within the Council’s set-up it appears that it is necessary once again to visit the whole reason KRiSP exists, what it is attempting to achieve, and its remit, and for this information to be shared with as many officers and departments as is possible.
CONCLUSION

Many of the issues encountered during this investigation are residual from the changes involved in moving away from the Residential Warden scheme and tackling this will be the key cultural challenge facing both staff and residents. As in many previous investigations we have again uncovered a department working without any over-arching policy documents setting out objectives for the service. However, KRiSP is pleased to note that there are updated and robust procedures in place.

Also of concern is a lack of inter-departmental co-operation and communication which, for the benefit of staff and residents, must be addressed. The reason given for the need to have two departments is that their funding comes from separate sources, but this is something that other London boroughs have dealt with successfully when reuniting their services. The lack of Key Performance Indicators leads to an unmeasurable service that is unable to demonstrate Value for Money and thus preventing KRiSP from fulfilling its first objective as identified in our Methodology.

Even before the tragedy of Grenfell Tower we had identified and intended to draw attention to the need to review the way Fire Alarm checks were conducted coupled with concerns around the advice being given to residents, who by definition are in a Sheltered environment, as to the actions to take in case of a fire. We believe that this issue plus the Safeguarding Incident that we have included at Appendix 1 should be treated as a matter for urgent review by all who have responsibility for the welfare and safety of residents in Sheltered Housing.

We are disappointed to find that despite our Recommendation 2, contained in our Investigation into Service Charges in July 2015, no progress in altering its approach
to providing a breakdown of all charges (including Service Charges) for residents. A quote from that report is still relevant today “that if the process of resident involvement is to progress forward this is an opportunity for RBK to demonstrate its commitment”.

Lastly we are grateful for the openness and honesty of the members of staff who shared their experiences and frustrations with us and hope that this report will assist them in their efforts to provide the current and future residents of RBK’s Sheltered Housing Service with the level of service that they are entitled to expect.