

# MODEL FOR EXTRA CARE HOUSING IN WIRRAL



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## Design Principles and Aims

### Overview

The Extra Care Housing Programme being developed for Wirral Council is intended to help older people and people with a learning or physical disability achieve greater independence and well-being, by giving them more choice over their care options., Extra Care Housing will help divert older people from moving into residential care and will allow the Borough to reinvest valuable resources into other services.

### Core Principles

The Transforming Care Programme is all about improving help and care services so that more people can live in the community with the right support and close to home. Extra Care Housing enables people with a disability to live in a home of their own in a designated development, with 24-hour care and support services on site.

Extra Care Housing is not intended to be a substitute for sheltered housing, flexible community support services or supported living housing. Instead, Extra Care Housing is intended to complement other types of provision, particularly for those who are unable to continue living in their own homes but wish to live more independently with the right care and support available on site. Extra Care Housing can be a community-based alternative to residential care, or other shared schemes. The dependency mix of residents will vary for each scheme.

Key features and principles that modern Extra Care Housing should include are as follows: -

- a) To provide accessible specially designed housing that enables independent living for older people and those with physical or learning mental health disabilities.
- b) To explore and include, where appropriate, assistive technology.
- c) To enable people to live safely in their own apartments and to monitor those who have dementia or other mental health problems.
- d) To provide communal facilities to allow community activities to be organised and to provide other services (e.g., a café/restaurant, assisted bathing, support to work); sensory room, communal kitchen, dining area these should be agreed for each scheme as requirements will vary.
- e) To provide flexible 'round the clock' 24-hour emergency and unplanned care, delivered by a consistent on-site care team.
- f) To provide a mixed community including those with different levels of ability, that can include the provision of apartments with different tenures and number of bedrooms.
- g) To create an environment that is enabling and supports best reablement practice.
- h) Facilities which enable the care and support needs of residents to be met efficiently and safely.  
To support and enable people to find privacy, comfort, support, and companionship.
- i) To be a resource for the local community, both developing relationships to bring the community in as well as opportunities for tenants to integrate with activities outside of the scheme.
- j) To provide support to work based and employment work placements, voluntary work opportunities and to 'skill developing' activities.

## Brief and Design Criteria

It is anticipated that as Extra Care Housing could be delivered through new build, remodelling and/or conversion of existing buildings that any final design brief would have to be agreed for each scheme. It is expected that the Council and key partners are involved in the initial concept and early discussions of any scheme pre-design and pre planning to ensure schemes are developed to meet identified needs. The Council has a role in design development throughout the process, and this will help developers take account of existing and planned provision. Within this document are the concepts and criteria which Wirral wishes to see as a model to be adopted for Extra Care Housing in the Borough.

## General Principles of Extra Care in Wirral

There are a number of overarching principles that should apply to Extra Care Housing to ensure the provision of a 'home for life' as far as is reasonably practical. In line with this, variations in core design specifications, service charges, and services on offer should be kept to an absolute minimum between tenants and leaseholders in each scheme.

In order for future provision to be successful, Wirral Council would expect the following matters to be addressed in any design and development:

- a) **Visual Impairment** - consideration of lighting, colour schemes, tonal contrast, casting of shadows, audible signals, and tactile information.
- b) **Hearing Impairment** - provision of hearing loops in communal spaces, use of materials to reduce reverberation, greater visual access to a person's surroundings.
- c) **Accessible i.e., doors (automatic, key fob entry), lift, bathrooms, kitchen, door sensors** - consideration of space standards to accommodate this to include but not limited to floors being level with no steps and being flush at junctions. Accommodation must be accessible by wheelchairs with sufficient turning space, adapted kitchens and wet rooms.
- d) **Cognitive Impairment** - to include consideration of maximising natural lighting, creating landmark features and avoiding long corridors.
- e) **Location** - consideration of proximity to local shops and amenities, community facilities, transport, health services, and employment support services.
- f) **Non- institutional** - To be domestic in style and avoid creating an institutional feel, both in terms of the built environment and also fixture and fittings used.
- g) **Welcoming and easy to navigate** - The entrance should be clear and welcoming; with the building layout easy to understand, clearly signed, and private/public spaces obvious.
- h) **Tenure** - consideration of a mix of both one and two bed homes which include those for affordable rent and shared ownership for people with different levels of ability. In addition, all schemes should aim to achieve a balance between high, medium, and low needs and some should consider the provision of accommodation and care for a proportion of people with dementia.
- i) **Communal Facilities** - consideration of the provision of facilities such as a communal dining room, café, hairdressers, and shop which could, depending on location, also support the local community.
- j) **Care and Support** - To provide flexible 24-hour care delivered by an on-site care team and to enable those who support the people who live there, to undertake tasks in a way that is efficient and can safely meet the care and support needs of residents. Every resident has to pay towards the

background support offer, regardless of how regularly they may use it. Core hours to be agreed with Wirral Health and Care Commissioning (WHCC)

- k) **Service charges** - must be affordable so that individuals can afford to remain in Extra Care Housing as a home for life, rents to be agreed prior to commissioning approval.

### Specific Requirements

On certain schemes there may be a number of specific requirements that Wirral would wish to see incorporated into an Extra Care Housing scheme such as:

- a) **Flexible multi-functional rooms** - support wider community use, as well as resident use, depending on location; through the inclusion of a number of flexible use rooms capable of supporting uses such as: Hairdressing, Foot care / other clinics, Therapies / treatments / consultations, Community mentoring services / social groups hobbies / activities / clubs etc.
- b) **Outdoor space** - communal gardens function on several levels, providing both stimulating views from within the building and potential for extending internal activities into the immediate surroundings. Raised beds enable elderly or wheelchair bound residents to appreciate the planting and the opportunity to contribute to gardening activities. If the site allows, an external residents drying yard can be linked to the laundry area, parking spaces.
- c) **Outdoor seating** - Benches should be located at all main entrances for those awaiting transport. The design and siting of seating must also consider the requirements for a minibus drop-off under cover and to allow for the anticipated size and tracking of emergency and service vehicles, turning heads and waiting bay.
- d) **Boundaries & Footpaths** – Accessible outdoor space should be enclosed, subject to design considerations, to ensure security and to avoid uncontrolled wandering. Secure wandering circuits should be integrated into the design to provide opportunities for exercise. Seating points should be strategically located to allow for resting. Sudden unguarded changes in level are to be avoided. The route to the entrance from the parking area should be level or ramped. Dropped kerbs should be provided to facilitate access from parking bays to the main entrance. All paths should avoid dead ends and provide a clear route back to their origin.
- e) **External storage** - Adequate refuse, clinical waste and recycling storage must always be provided. The size and requirements for secure cycle and buggy/scooter storage must also be considered with charging facilities.
- f) **Kitchen facilities** - provide kitchen facilities to enable freshly cooked meals to be provided. Kitchens to be self- sufficient and open /marketed for wider community use.
- g) **Restaurant/Café** - provide a restaurant / café area for both residents and the public to use, depending on location.
- h) **Laundry** - enable residents to undertake their own laundry in their flats should they wish. In addition, a small communal laundry facility to be available for residents.
- i) **Privacy** - ensure 'progressive privacy' principles are adhered to, ensuring communal facilities are away from residents' flats and ensuring that staff and the public do not need to walk through residents' corridors to reach their destination. Also, keep the use of restrictive internal locking systems to a minimum.
- j) **Refuse** – In addition to any planning requirement for on-site recycling, to offer refuse / recycling collection points on each floor for residents use, if possible.
- k) **Assistive technology** - make best use of assistive technology in managing the scheme and delivering care and support services to residents.
- l) **TV / Internet** - provide a communal infrastructure to deliver assistive technology, cable/satellite digital TV to each flat and key communal areas and WIFI in each flat and key communal/staff areas.

## Meeting specific needs

There are a number of specific requirements in relation to meeting specific needs and these are:

- a) **Dementia** - support to people with early onset/moderate levels of dementia from day one and support to severe dementia sufferers as their needs increase in the longer term.

People suffering from confusion are less likely to become frustrated if they are able to clearly see and understand their surroundings.

This is often referred to as providing a visually accessible environment. For example, an environment where there are good visual clues, such as views to the outside and views from circulation spaces into communal spaces. Glazed screens and doors to communal areas enable residents to enter a room with the confidence of knowing what is going on inside.

Design features should be incorporated that will help with orientation, recognition, and familiarity. A simple floor plan should be provided to guide orientation with the help of cues and landmarks and by maximising the amount of natural light in the building, particularly where there is a change in level or direction. Smart technology can be of particular benefit to residents with dementia. For example, movement through doors can be monitored with movement (PIR) sensors without encroaching on the freedom and privacy of residents.

Each individual will respond in a different way in terms of patterns and rate of deterioration. The universal characteristics of 'home' should be recognised to create a supportive, enabling environment that might ameliorate the degenerative process.

- b) **Design Principles for Short Term Memory Loss** - these include:

- A pleasant familiar domestic environment
- Domesticity in scale and character
- Space to be surrounded by personal possessions
- A simple, easily comprehensible layout
- Visual accessibility, key vistas, open plan, etc.
- Visual cues: personalizing entrances, use of color, artwork etc.
- Small scale living – cluster arrangement
- A plan to facilitate wandering
- Elimination of 'dead-end' corridors
- Security.
- Appropriate garden/amenity provision
- Integration with the community

- c) **Day care and intermediate or respite care**

Wirral may also wish to commission day activities, respite care and intermediate care within an extra care scheme, but this would be determined on a site-by-site basis. Some older people with learning difficulties may wish to move into an Extra Care Housing development. Others may already be living in a specialist accommodation-based scheme for people with learning difficulties, or in supported living scheme, and may wish to remain living in these types of services. The key issue will be to give older people with learning difficulties greater choice over their housing options.

- d) **Learning Disability and autism**

Extra Care Independent Living housing for people with learning disabilities does not have significantly different design issues from extra-care for older people; however, consideration should be given to the needs of:

- People with a learning disability living in a residential setting or with Carers who may need to move because of changing needs.
- People with a learning disability who need specially designed or adapted dwellings including the provision of suitably enabling assistive technology.
- People with a learning disability who need enhanced housing care and support.

- People with autism who need enhanced housing care and support.
- People with a learning disability who have complex needs.
- The ethos of Extra Care Independent Living for people with a learning disability /mental health is around enabling the person to be as independent as possible and to be able to access the community to fulfil their full potential. The service will have staff on site to respond to Assistive Technology throughout the 24-hour period and provide some pop in calls, low level prompting, some housing support tasks and organising occasional social activities.
- People will be assessed for specific hours that they require to carry out specific tasks. It is not anticipated that people will need a member of staff with them at all times as the ethos for the service is to promote independence.

#### e) Long Term conditions

Design should also accommodate the needs of residents with a typical long-term condition and health needs associated with stroke, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, mental health, brain injury, MS, and obesity.

#### General Requirements

Any development of Extra Care Housing would be expected to meet Wirral's planning policies, supplementary planning guidance and sustainable design principles. It is also expected that developments incorporate dementia friendly design principles which are tested by the University of Stirling Audit Tool. Wirral Council may conduct audits of developments utilising the Audit Tool.

Any Programme of development would be expected to be designed in consultation with the Council's Department of Social Services, Strategic Housing and Investment Team and Development Management colleagues. Any housing which is affordable would also need to have regard to the Nationally Described Space Standard. Generally, Extra Care Housing should also meet the full nationally described wheelchair accessible standards throughout.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/technical-housing-standards-nationally-described-space-standard>

The size of each Extra Care Housing scheme will vary depending on the need of residents, the requirements of the local authority and the size of the site. Economies of scale should be achieved without detracting from the quality of life enjoyed by residents. Schemes can either be newly purpose built or can be remodelled from existing sheltered housing schemes where feasible and viable.

Extra Care Housing schemes should provide a mix of one and two bed homes; the exact number will be negotiated for each scheme; however, the bulk of units should be one bed. In addition, Wirral wishes to see a mix of tenure of extra care however the proportion will be negotiated for each scheme to reflect market conditions. The scheme will also need to comply with local planning policy on minimum affordable housing requirements.

#### Dependency mix and assessment and allocations

All people moving into Extra Care Housing must have an assessed need for care and support, eligible under the Care Act 2014, as well as a housing need. It is important to maintain a balanced level of need within each scheme in terms of levels of eligible need for the core hour support services to be able to effectively respond. Allocations into Extra Care Housing will be made through the Extra Care Housing process following an assessment by a qualified social worker. This will ensure that there is a mix of clients who have high, medium, and low care and support needs in any one Extra Care Housing scheme.

In relation to couples, eligibility would need to be determined with regard to at least one person.

#### Location

Extra care schemes must be located near good transport links and close to a wide range of community amenities and healthcare facilities. The Council's emerging Core Strategy Local Plan seeks to direct higher density residential development to urban sites within an easy walking distance of an existing town, district or local center or a high frequency public transport corridor.

## Operational Principles

Wirral Council wish to see Extra Care Housing schemes operating in a manner which:

- a) Promotes independence, healthy, active ageing, and overall general and emotional wellbeing.
- b) Promotes social inclusion for residents and the local community; ensuring that older people are not left socially isolated and lonely behind their own flat door. This should be through the development of close links with the local health and social care sector, voluntary sector, and private/business sector to promote the use of the extra care scheme's facilities and services, to develop a full range/programme of activities/therapies/treatments/services that could be provided to residents and the local community within the scheme.
- c) Empowers residents to have a strong and active say in how they wish to see their scheme operating and working - including making informed decisions around provision of new services and associated costs/service charges.

## Residents

As well as providing an environment that can provide for emotional and support needs, it is essential that the physical environment is 'enabling' in particular for those who may experience increasing care needs with the advancement of age and frailty, also and physical disabilities.

## Key Design and Specification Issues

### Supporting impairments, disabilities, and frailty

- a) Free-swing' door closers linked to the fire alarm should be fitted to the front doors of flats and other doors regularly used by residents. Remove obstructions such as fire compartment doors, which can be held open on magnetic pads. This will avoid the hazard and frustration associated with heavy overhead door closers. Specify vision panels to doors along circulation routes and leading to communal rooms.
- b) Specify handrails along both sides of circulation routes that are appropriately scored to assist way-finding for those with visual impairments. Consider the design of handrails which return to the wall to avoid snagging of clothing on their free ends, which can easily lead to a fall for a frail older person.
- c) Specify appropriate ironmongery, taps etc. for older people with limited dexterity.
- d) At least one stretcher sized lift should be included to accommodate long-base wheelchairs/stretchers/coffins.
- e) Wheelchair standard design should be provided throughout the building. However, consideration should be given to the fact that certain areas such as residents' individual kitchens can be designed for adaptation for people who do not use a wheelchair until a later stage in their life. This will avoid costly fit outs at the initial stage and result in a more user-friendly space for the majority of residents who will never use a wheelchair in the kitchen. Allowances for future changes should be designed in from the beginning: the construction and detailing of the building should allow for ceiling hoists to be retrofitted within flats and stud-partition walls should be reinforced for grab rails in bath and shower rooms.
- f) Specify level-threshold showers. Flooding in en-suite bathrooms with flush showers has been found to be a problem frequently faced in this typology. Locate the shower away from doors and take care with building tolerances, detail a fall in the floor of the shower tray area only. Specify a shower head that can be tilted downwards and not fixed at one angle.
- g) Combine shower head rails with a grab rail to avoid residents pulling the shower rails off the wall in the event of slipping.
- h) Specify sockets and switches at appropriate height.
- i) Generally, any ramps should, as a minimum, comply with the provisions of the Building Regulations.
- j) Acoustics: The importance of adequate sound separation and reduction of reverberation is especially important in Extra Care schemes where some, but not all residents suffer from hearing impairments. In some cases, Building Control have relaxed the stringent reverberation requirements in corridors and stairwells based on the user group.

## Wayfinding

- a) Good use of natural light and views out are essential, particularly on circulation routes and at stair and lift landings
- b) The use of clear glazed screens to communal areas greatly improves the feeling of light and space within the building and enables good visual access throughout. Floor to ceiling glazing could be introduced where it is safe to do so in order to create an open, contemporary feel.
- c) Good use of colour and tonal contrast and tactile materials aid orientation. These ensure that corridors do not become monotonous and assist wayfinding. Use 'accent' colors to pick out important landmarks or entrances.
- d) Recessed doors to flats and kitchen windowsills onto corridors provide a place for residents to display personal items which assist in distinguishing flats.
- e) Small seating bays along corridors or overlooking interesting vistas are very popular with residents and help to create landmarks to aid orientation.

## Lighting

- a) Lighting design is crucial. A range of different luminaries and light sources should avoid glare and sharp shadows.
- b) Careful design of switching and dimming will ensure that different atmospheres can be created, and different needs catered for.
- c) The importance of natural lighting is strongly emphasised as this can impact moods, way finding, solar gain etc. Corridors should ideally be lit from windows or roof lights (including kitchen windows onto corridors) to avoid long, dull vistas. Consider floor voids to enable natural light to reach lower floors. Balconies and winter gardens enable natural light and views of nature and contribute to wellbeing.
- d) Avoid numerous light fittings in a regimented array, which may cause a clinical, institutional appearance and avoid performance specifying lighting as BS lux levels as this will restrict the end design due to the requirement for uniformity. Balance ceiling mounted fittings with the use of wall mounted fittings and specify feature lights where appropriate with suitable lux levels, e.g.: communal lounges, winter gardens, halls etc.
- e) Avoid sharp contrasts between highly lit and dark spaces, as the ability of one's eyes to adapt to different levels of light decreases with age. Specify adjustable and flexible lighting to create various atmospheres or reduce/increase lighting levels to suit an activity.
- f) Install lighting along the main routes of pathways so that the garden can be used safely in the evening. Good lighting is also required to all parking areas to provide surveillance lighting and CCTV as required for security.

## Interior Design

High quality interior design will provide atmosphere and ambiance for key spaces. Little consideration in this area can dramatically influence the success of a development. A well-considered scheme will improve kerb-appeal, provide delight and a sense of pride. Market appeal is critical in both the public and private sector for any sustainable development.

- a) **Contrast** - Reduce the effects of visual impairments by incorporating colour schemes that use contrasting tones to highlight features within the building and avoid 'visual clutter'. There should be a contrast between the floor, walls, and ceiling so that those with visual impairment can have an increased awareness of spatial dimensions.
- b) **Specification of finishes** - Avoid shiny surfaces, especially shiny floor surfaces, as this confuses those with visual impairment. Highly patterned floor and worktop surfaces should also be avoided as this makes objects set against them harder to distinguish, e.g. a set of keys which has fallen on the floor. Natural materials assist way finding, divide spaces, highlight level changes etc. and help create a warm and less clinical environment. Specify finishes for large spaces with higher ceilings such as lounges and dining rooms with a high acoustic absorbency, in order to reduce echoes for the benefit

of those with hearing impairments.

- c) **Dividing spaces** - Different spaces, particularly within the 'community village' should be considered individually to enhance their function and create an ambiance with a combination of lighting and subdivision of space. Large areas can be subdivided into smaller, more intimate spaces by the use of screening, indoor planting, variation in ceiling height, lighting, and appropriate furnishing.
- d) **Corridors** - Within corridors, create a domestic appearance with careful attention to floor finishes and choice of light fittings. Consider integrating the handrails with a dado rail and a change in paint colour or wallpaper.
- e) **Orientation** - The use of colour or themes will be an important tool for assisting with way-finding. Different colour ways or use of themed wall art/photos can be adopted for different floors or areas of the building to assist visitors or residents with orientating themselves. This is particularly successful at the points where people exit from a staircase or lift.
- f) **Signage** - The design of signage is paramount, and a clear strategy should be developed which outlines its hierarchy, locations, and style. Signage must comply with Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300:2001 provides additional points to consider.

### **Tenancies and nominations**

- a) **Tenancy agreements** - these should be in 'easy read' formats for all prospective tenants.
- b) **Mental Capacity** - Issues of capacity need to be considered in relation to the signing of tenancy agreements.
- c) **Nominations agreement** - The Council fully expect that they will hold the nominations agreements for Extra Care schemes in the borough.

### **Round the Clock Care Provision**

It is expected that the round the clock or 24-hour provision of care on site is commissioned by the Local Authority who are responsible for this element of extra care. There may be exceptions to this on a time limited basis where an existing housing scheme is developed to become extra care and there are existing contracts to work to conclusion. There is a requirement that the care provider is accredited by the Council and is paid at the Council's rate.

