

Housing and City Development Scrutiny Committee

18 November 2024

Independent Living Review and Future Model

Report of the Statutory Scrutiny Officer

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To scrutinise the development and delivery planning of housing that supports older Council tenants in living an independent life.

2 Action required

- 2.1 The Committee is asked:

- 1) to make any comments or recommendations in response to the Executive Member for Housing and Planning's report on the delivery of Independent Living in Nottingham and the development of a new model of service provision; and
- 2) to consider whether any further scrutiny of the issue is required (and, if so, to identify the focus and timescales).

3 Background information

- 3.1 The Council's Independent Living provision represents designated housing for older people. As of 2021, there were just under 38,000 residents aged 65+ in the city. Currently, the Council has 1,986 Independent Living homes across 59 individual communities, with a mixture of corridor, courtyard (consisting of ground and 1st floor maisonettes) and bungalow schemes. The majority of Independent Living homes are one-bedroom and are established around communal facilities. However, there is currently relatively low demand for this form of provision, so the existing model for Independent Living is being re-evaluated, as it has remained largely unchanged since 2010.
- 3.2 Whilst there is notionally a strong general demand for Independent Living provision, the majority of applicants have a very specific ask for bungalow and two-bedroom accommodation, often within specific geographical areas. As a result, bungalow and new-build schemes have a strong demand and shorter relet times, while upstairs maisonette properties and corridor schemes have significantly less demand. The data analysis carried out indicates that there is currently an oversupply of older persons' accommodation in the city and a lower demand for this form of provision than for 'general needs' housing.
- 3.3 As of 31 March 2024, Independent Living homes accounted for 8% of the Council's housing stock, but 23% of its voids. The average relet times for Independent Living homes currently stands at 115 days whereas it is 26 days

for general needs homes. Over the past five years, the level of Independent Living terminations has outstripped lettings, with an average of 213 terminations per year against 197 lettings. However, whilst demand for Independent Living properties has decreased, there is increasing demand for both general needs housing and temporary accommodation for people who are homeless. There are approximately 11,000 applicants on the Housing Register, with general needs lettings running at 842 per year. The Council is providing accommodation for 664 homeless families, of whom 103 are currently housed in hotels.

- 3.4 The Council commissioned the Housing Quality Network (HQN) to support the review of Independent Living, building on the data analysis and other work undertaken during 2022. The work carried out by the HQN concluded that there was a probable oversupply of Independent Living provision and that there was a sound rationale for changing the eligibility criteria for the service, but that more could be done to enhance both the lettings process and the lettable standard of properties, and that a full options appraisal taking account of stock condition factors should be undertaken to determine the best future use of the current Independent Living schemes.
- 3.5 As a result of the data analysis undertaken, the outcome of the HQN review and the high levels of demand for Council housing, a number of proposals are being considered regarding the future delivery model and extent of Independent Living, including:
- a) the selection of an additional small number of Independent Living schemes to be redesignated during 2025/26 in order to rebalance housing supply, with options appraisals to be undertaken to determine the best use of those sites selected for de-designation;
 - b) re-branding older persons' housing to become Retirement Living and changing the age-related eligibility criteria to 67 (or 60 if in receipt of a disability-related benefit);
 - c) developing a lettable standard for Independent Living homes with regard to the standard of decoration and the 'Housing our Ageing Population Panel for Innovation' principles for bathroom and kitchen fittings;
 - d) enhancing the lettings process to make it simpler for older people to apply, while also providing more support for both applicants and social care professionals; and
 - e) carrying out more active marketing of provision, linking in with other workstreams, to encourage 'right-sizing' in order to free up under-occupied family homes.

4 List of attached information

- 4.1 Report: Independent Living Review and Future Model

5 Background papers, other than published works or those disclosing exempt or confidential information

- 5.1 None

6 Published documents referred to in compiling this report

6.1 [Housing Services – Independent Living](#)

7 Wards affected

7.1 All

8 Contact information

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