

Stroud District Council Sheltered Housing Review FACTSHEET / Frequently Asked Questions



Dear Resident,

Stroud District Council is looking to make changes to its sheltered housing services. We want to make sure that tenants have their say on any changes that are being considered.

The Tenant Participation Advisory Service (TPAS) has been appointed as your Independent Tenant Advisor. This means TPAS will help all sheltered housing tenants, general tenants and stakeholders of Stroud District Council understand what changes and options are being considered.

The Council has worked with TPAS to create a Consultation Document which explains the changes that could be made to sheltered housing services. It also explains the reasons behind these changes.

TPAS has talked to Council officers and has had access to financial information when preparing the Consultation Document.

TPAS believes that the Consultation Document fairly represents the issues being consulted on, and the reasons for this consultation.

There are still a number of questions that will be raised during this period. Many of these questions are better answered by someone who does not work for the Council.

That is why TPAS has made this FACTSHEET. It contains answers to some of the common questions that will be asked about the Sheltered Housing Review.

If you want any more information, or would like to talk to a member of our team, please call our freephone number:
0800 731 1619 (calls free from landlines only)
Alternatively you can e-mail: info@TPAS.org.uk

We will ensure that we get back to you and answer any questions.

Best wishes
TPAS



Introduction - Key Areas of Consultation

The Consultation Document shows that the Council is looking at four main issues relating to how the current sheltered housing service is run. These are:

Addressing the Shortfall – It costs more to run the sheltered housing service than the amount its tenants pay for it. The service currently runs at a loss. Should this be addressed? If so, how can it be addressed?

Paying for the Service – Tenants currently pay a fixed charge for their care and support services. This is called the sheltered support charge. The Council wants to hear your views on changing this system. A new system could mean tenants who need the most support pay more and those who need less support pay less.

How the Service is Managed and Support Provided – Four ways of managing the sheltered housing service have been shown in the Consultation Document. This includes an option to keep the service mainly as it is.

Existing Properties and Changing Needs – A small number of the Council's sheltered properties are no longer suitable for supported accommodation. Some are in unpopular locations, and some do not meet the standards of quality that homes need to meet (set by the Government in the Decent Homes Standard). The Council's bedsit properties are unpopular and difficult to fill.

The needs of older people are changing. More tenants now need the care provided by 'extra sheltered accommodation.' This is also known as 'extra care.' The Council is considering changes to some individual schemes. Tenants living in individual schemes will be given more information on any changes affecting their accommodation.

The Council has a number of choices to make. The Consultation Document explains these choices and the reasons they are being considered. It also explains the advantages and disadvantages of the main choices.



1. How will the Council decide which choices to make?

Government guidelines mean the Council must show it has fully consulted with tenants before making important decisions.

TPAS will work with tenants on a consultation programme to make sure you have the proper input. TPAS will keep you informed of any changes via resident groups, newsletters, radio, drop-in sessions, visits to the sheltered schemes and visits to individual tenants, where requested.

The Council will consider information on how the different choices would affect services to tenants, both now and in the future. It will also consider how the choices will affect the Council as a whole.

- The Council will take into account what its tenants say during the consultation period.
- Sheltered housing tenants will have a chance to tell TPAS which choices best suit their needs.
- General tenants and stakeholders will also be able to give their views.

The Council will take all of these views into account once the consultation is completed and decide how to move forward.

It will go on to develop the chosen way forward in more detail. This next development process will also involve tenants.

2. Why is the Council doing this?

The Council's main aim is to find the best and fairest way of providing support and care services to older tenants with the money available. TPAS agrees with this.

The needs and expectations of older people, and their families, have changed. What is considered 'best practice' has changed, and the way sheltered housing and care and support services are funded has changed.

The Council has spent two-and-a-half years considering what changes might improve the service. It has now identified different ways the service could improve and is asking tenants and stakeholders for their views on the ideas.



3. What is a 'stakeholder?'

'Stakeholder' describes people or organisations who have a genuine interest in how Stroud runs and provides its sheltered housing.

Sheltered housing tenants are the most important stakeholders. Other stakeholders include:

- Possible future tenants.
- Other older people in the community.
- Staff who provide the service.
- The Government and Council who pay much of the cost.

4. Will I have to pay extra?

This is part of the consultation. A big challenge for the Council is that it costs more to provide the service to tenants in sheltered accommodation than its tenants currently pay.

There are very important choices to make which could result in tenants paying more or less. Some of the changes proposed would cost more to introduce, others would save money.

There is a suggestion that charges should be based around how much support a tenant needs. This would mean some tenants would pay significantly more and others significantly less.

4a. Are the proposed changes fair?

That is for you to decide. The Council needs to know which of the choices you feel is the fairest.

5. Why are general needs tenants having a say on the future of sheltered schemes?

General needs tenants may one day become sheltered housing tenants.



Many older tenants living in general needs properties may need support and care, but want to remain in their current homes.

The Council has to make difficult decision on how to balance spending on keeping older people in their homes, and spending on sheltered schemes.

At the moment some money that would normally be used to provide management and repairs services to general needs tenants is being used to pay for sheltered accommodation.

This means that general needs tenants receive a slightly lower service than they would otherwise get.

The views of general needs tenants are important. Some may think spending more on older tenants is fair as they may benefit from this later in life. It is up to tenants to have their say.

5a. Why are general needs stakeholders having a say on the future of sheltered schemes?

How the service is run is very important to staff. Staff will have views on which options will work better or worse. Their experience should be shared.

The Government and Council help pay for the sheltered services through Housing Benefits and the Supporting People Fund. They need to know the money is being spent properly and that support is being shared among residents who need it.

6. Would I be expected to move to another property?

There is nothing in the Consultation Document to suggest this.
There are two things to consider:

- The Council is considering increasing the number of 'extra care' properties. This would let more vulnerable tenants live for longer in independent accommodation. This will offer some sheltered tenants accommodation which is more suited to their needs.



- A small number of sheltered schemes are in poor locations for older people. The Council is also struggling to bring some properties up to modern standards. There is nothing in the Consultation Document that suggests tenants in these schemes will have to move. However, the Council cannot guarantee that this will never happen.

7. *Hasn't the Council already decided what to do?*

No. This is why TPAS is involved with the consultation. TPAS will make sure that tenants are fully aware of the choices they are facing.

Following discussions with the Council, TPAS feels that there is a genuine debate within the Council over which choices are best. TPAS also feels that opinions of tenants expressed during the consultation are very likely to influence the final decision.

8. *Will my rent go up?*

What the Council charges in rent is set by a Government formula. Any changes in rent will not be because of this consultation.

Rent is only part of what sheltered housing tenants pay for their accommodation and services provided.

All sheltered tenants also pay a landlord charge and a sheltered support charge. These pay towards the cost of services, care and support. More details of these charges are explained in the Consultation Document.

9. *Will it affect my Council Tax?*

No. Council Tax will remain the same.

10. *How will it affect repairs and maintenance?*

Money provided by the landlord charge and sheltered support charge does not cover the cost of the service provided. The Council has to find money to cover the deficit.



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This shortfall is paid for out of money that would be used to pay for management and repairs of all the Council's homes. This includes some sheltered accommodation, but mainly general needs properties.

If the deficit could be reduced or removed then the Council would have more money to spend on management and repairs. Some of this would benefit sheltered accommodation.

11. How will I be affected with regard to adaptations for disablement by Social Services?

These will not be affected.

12. Will any of this make where I live safe – what about anti-social behaviour?

All landlords will still have the power to evict tenants who misbehave and break the terms of their tenancy agreement.

Local police forces now have more powers to deal with groups of people causing trouble.

All the political parties are committed to creating safer neighbourhoods.

TPAS cannot see how the choices in the Consultation Document will have an impact on safety.

If you have any thoughts on this please share them with TPAS or the Council so that they can be used in the decision making process.

13. What if I am happy as I am and don't want to change?

It is very important to make this point during the consultation. If the Council only hears from people who want change then the Council will assume that is what tenants want.



14. *Can I talk to someone about this – will someone visit me?*

Yes, you can talk to someone.

TPAS has been appointed as the Independent Tenant Advisor for Stroud District Council tenants. You can contact TPAS on 0800 731 1619 (calls free from landlines only), and someone will get back to you to answer your questions. Or you can email TPAS on info@tpas.org.uk.

15. *What is an Independent Tenant Advisor?*

It is important that tenants receive independent and impartial advice during the consultation.

An Independent Tenant Advisor has been appointed to make sure this happens. TPAS is the Independent Tenant Advisor for this consultation.

16. *Will we get to express our views on all the choices available?*

Yes. Everyone will have an opportunity to express their views and discuss any outstanding issues.

17. *Will services improve?*

This question is why tenants are involved in these decisions. This is your opportunity to decide the kind of services you would like to see. You can influence which option the Council chooses so that it best fits tenants' needs.

18. *How long do we have to decide?*

The consultation will be completed by December 2010. Tenants will have plenty of opportunities to ask questions and take part in discussions before making a decision. Tenants will be kept informed throughout the process.

19. *What if we can't decide?*

The Council needs to make a number of decisions by December 2010.



20. *Why is there such a rush with all of this?*

The Council has been reviewing its sheltered housing for three years.

It needs to put plans in place to move forward. It wants to ensure that tenants get the service that they deserve.

The Council has been tasked to complete the consultation phase by Christmas 2010.

21. *Will tenants be given more of a say / greater involvement?*

The Council is working with TPAS to make sure tenants have their say.

TPAS is independent of all groups involved in running or lobbying the Council. It will ensure 'fair play' if different groups try to dominate proceedings.

The role of TPAS is to ensure that all sheltered tenants have an equal chance to have their say. This is why this consultation programme is being carried out.

The more tenants are involved the better service the Council can provide.

22. *Do these FAQs apply to all the choices?*

This FACTSHEET covers all the choices as far as it can. If you still have questions, please contact us on the freephone number at the end of this document.



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Accessibility

If you, a friend, relative or neighbour need any help during this consultation – such as language translations or have sight and hearing needs – please phone or email Stroud District Council on this number:

01453 766321
e-mail customer.services@stroud.gov.uk

If you find getting to a consultation event difficult please speak to a TPAS advisor. They will explain the process in detail to you.

This service is confidential.

TPAS is happy to help. We want to make sure that everyone is informed and has their say!

Please help TPAS reach all tenants by passing this message on.
If you have any other questions you can contact the TPAS team on this freephone number:

FREEPHONE 0800 731 1619
Or TEXT 07976 316 534

The TPAS Team:

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