

Housing Discussion Meeting

Monday 24th January 2011

6-8.30pm at The Abbey Centre, Daventry

Notes of the meeting

People who came to the meeting

Lisa Judge – Learning Disability Partnership Board
Lisa Alleman – Learning Disability Partnership Board
Dawn Crawford – Learning Disability Partnership Board
Marion Turner – Housing Plan for Adults with Learning Disabilities
Karon Hawes - Housing Plan for Adults with Learning Disabilities
Curtis Best – Representative of Daventry Local Partnership Group
Andrea Gilchrist – Bromford Support
Mal Thompson – DASH (Daventry Area Safer Homes)
John Smith – Centre for Independent Living
Jill Lammond – Livability
Claire Tudhope – Livability
Wendy Baker – Medical Officer, Daventry District Council
Vinni Bassan – Senior Housing Policy Officer, Daventry District Council
Kim Doogan – Housing Options Manager, Daventry District Council
Dez Tanser - West Northants Strategic Housing Co-ordinator, Daventry District Council
Colin Grundy – Commissioning, Northamptonshire County Council
Michelle Coupe – Independent Skills Environment
Karen Durant– Independent Skills Environment
Sharon Best
Russell Best
Valarie Burr
Caroline Billingham
Godfrey Ingram
Marie McCance
Amanda Eaton
Lynne Topham
Irene Spencer

Marion Turner presented the housing plan for adults with learning disabilities and information about the Community Housing and Support Network. Please read Marion's presentation for more information

Mal Thompson co-ordinates Daventry timebank. There are timebanks in Daventry, Kettering and Northampton, soon there will be timebanks in Corby and Wellingborough.

Question: When will the Community Housing and Support Network start?

Marion Turner: The network is beginning now, there has been one meeting already, if you are interested, we can send you an invite to the meetings and there will be information on our website www.myhomemysay.co.uk

We will launch the plan in the papers and on the radio soon.

Question: To be part of the network, is it attending meetings or contacting people one to one when they need help? What will the network look like?

Marion Turner: We will have a base where we will have meetings, we can vary the location of meetings to help people attend. The network is very flexible and arrangements can be made when people join the network and we can see what people want,

Comment: It would be good to have a forum where people can post questions and get answers from those that know.

Marion Turner: We can use the website to do this. Meetings can be varied and different times of the day. We need to build relations between members and local housing authorities.

Question: The network will get money from social services, what will this be spent on? Will the network be based in Northampton?

Marion Turner: The network will not be based anywhere specifically at present as it will cover the whole county. The office base depends on who comes forward to host the network and how we choose to use the money to be most useful.

The money will pay for

- Setting up the network
- Supporting people on their housing journey
- Working with families to help each other
- Working with local housing offices to help them better help people
- Make the tools & information guides needed to help people

Question: When can you start to help people?

Marion Turner: You can join in from today. We will definitely be helping people by the beginning of April. Just let us know if you are interested in being involved.

Daventry District Council told us how to apply for housing. There is a choice-based letting system where people can bid on properties they are interested in. They are advertised on the website or you can ring up and see what is available. Homes are allocated depending on need (the person with the highest need would get a house first). When you look at properties you can bid on up to 3. The council will make a list of the people that are interested in a property and the home will be offered to the person with the highest need. The medical officer (Wendy Baker) assesses people's needs and puts them into a band. This is the category that says how high their needs are. The bands are:

Emergency band: people who are homeless or can't return home

A: People with the highest medical need

B: People who are sharing housing and do not have their own home

C: Vulnerable people, for example, people with disabilities

D: Anyone looking for a home

Daventry District Housing is a housing association formed when Daventry District Council sold their properties.

You can use auto-bid to automatically bid on properties that meet your needs. There is help for elderly people or people with learning disabilities to use the bidding system and a person can be nominated to do it for them. Also the council can send out a newsletter that people can use to choose properties.

Question: 6 months ago, we registered on the housing website and filled in the medical form, but have never qualified for any housing on the website. Nobody assessed my son, we got the password and banding in the post but no information about bidding. When I called the council no one answered my questions about the process. A second person had the same experience.

Vinni Bassan: The reason you are not qualifying is that there may not be any properties that fit your needs for example, if you are looking for a 1-bedroom property, it may be that no 1-bedroom properties have become available in the last 6 months.

Question: If friends who have learning disabilities want to live together, how can this happen?

Wendy Baker: We have seen from research in the past that there is no demand for this in the Daventry area, we need good information to make planning decisions for cases such as this.

Marion Turner: If people express an interest then the Community Housing and Support Network could help

Wendy agreed to connect with the network and look into why people had not had information about the bidding process.

Question: We need a live-in carer for our daughter but this couldn't happen if we were allocated a 1-bedroom property.

Wendy Baker: This would be considered a need and be included in the assessment so you could have a room for the carer.

Marion Turner: Housing Benefit is changing from April and will then pay for carer occupancy. Previously if a person had a 2 bed roomed home and there was only 1 person living there, the housing benefit office would have reduced the housing benefit payable because they would say the home was 'under occupied' (not enough people were living there). From April people who need a live in carer will not have their housing benefit reduced for this reason.

Note - If people already getting Housing Benefit know that their benefit is lower because of this reason, you should get in touch with your housing benefit office to make sure they know you could qualify for more housing benefit from April 2011. The housing benefit office is based at the local District or Borough Council.

Andrea Gilchrist: Bromford Support provide floating support to help people to fill out forms, bid and find properties. They can support those

at home and in care. They want to find out ways to promote this so people know they are available to help.

Marion Turner: we have already started on 1 action in the Housing Plan, this making a teaching module about housing for young people with learning disabilities. We aim to use this to help young people at school and college find out about ways of living and to help teachers and parents have a better understanding to support young people.

Kim Doogan: Daventry District Council have gone into schools before to talk to them about housing, but generally only main stream schools.

Kim agreed to connect with the network to help teaching and speaking to younger people about housing.

John Smith: The Centres for Independent Living at Northampton and Corby, have information about welfare, benefits and equipment. It is good to link people who live independently to those who are thinking about it so they can tell them about their experience.

Marion Turner will be putting some case studies and film stories on the My Home My Say website.

Question: What support is there if things start to go wrong?

Andrea Gilchrist: You can put in a referral to Bromford support and they can help with budget plans.

Colin Grundy: People may also need care support which Bromford do not provide. You would need to get in touch with Social Services and have an assessment of need so we can see the level of care support that is needed. Social Services provide care, the District or Borough Council provide the housing. If a person is offered a property, Daventry District Council would contact Social Services about the care for the person.

Comment: Houses should be built for people with learning disabilities from the very beginning.

Wendy Baker: We need to have accurate needs surveys to plan for the future.

Vinni Bassan: Daventry District Council are planning a survey at the moment. It should go to every home in Daventry or people can request one. People need to fill it out correctly so the council know what people need from housing. You will hear more about the survey around July.

Comment: People with disabilities are vulnerable, villages can be hard for people. Housing needs to be in the right place at the right time for the right people. Services need to think about bullying, how people will be treated and where their housing will be located. Older houses could be modernised for them.

Vinni Bassan: Sensitive lets will be taken into account.

Comment: A person should be allowed to stay in the village they have grown up in.

Wendy Baker: It can be a welfare need that the person needs to be near their family. This may be the case if the person has a severe illness or has high support needs.

Marion Turner: about 1500 people with learning disabilities are known to Social Services. If we are able to build a body of information about people's housing needs this would help create a sound body of information about housing demand locally.

The Housing & Support Network aims to help people joining it review their housing needs and this information can help to provide the data about what is needed for people locally.

John Smith: The special needs index can be used for planning. This is for people under 19 years old.

Dawn Crawford: There are plans to get a Learning Disability register, this means we will get full information about people with learning disabilities in Northamptonshire and their housing needs now and in the future. We hope the Community Housing and Support Network will give us what we need, we need to keep the enthusiasm going and show how working differently can make things happen.

Question: The council funded an extension to a family home for one of my clients so the person could stay with the family. Can this still happen?

Wendy Baker: Yes, where there is a need, the council would consider allocating it.

Colin Grundy: There are private landlords and other providers available. Care providers can buy houses so that people can live together when there is a need. There are other agencies.

Marion Turner: There is a list of housing options at the back of the housing plan for people with learning disabilities, and many ideas how people and families can create housing options other than renting from the Council of Housing Associations. The full plan will shortly be available from www.myhomemysay.co.uk website. An executive summary and easy read summary is already available.

Thank you to everybody who attended the meeting.