

Pathways Housing Research

Sheltered Housing in North Lincolnshire Wardens Perspective February 2000

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Introduction and Method

1. This report describes a research project undertaken by the Housing Research Officer at CCNAP during November and December 1999. The research was aimed at profiling the population who live in warden supported sheltered housing schemes in North Lincolnshire¹.
2. CCNAP has been commissioned to carry out a Pathways Housing Research project into the accommodation and support needs of older people in North Lincolnshire. Many housing organisations know a lot about their housing stock, but very little about their tenants. Within sheltered housing this could be a particular problem, as this group of tenants are likely to demand a relatively high level of support from the landlord and from a range of other statutory agencies. A relatively high proportion are also likely to need increased support in the future. In addition, there may be people within the community who could benefit from the services that are associated with this form of accommodation. A measurement of likely future demand and supply is required. This is particularly important when seen against a national trend for this type of sheltered accommodation to fall behind modern standards and become unpopular.
3. The overall Pathways Housing Research work aims to estimate current demand and project future demand and supply for different types of accommodation and support. This report is one of a number that will be published by CCNAP as the work progresses. The information collected and the estimates produced will inform multi-agency planning in North Lincolnshire about the accommodation and support needs of older people.
4. Pathways Housing Research entails interviewing professionals (in this case wardens/scheme managers) who have ongoing contact with a client population (in this case people living in sheltered housing). The research focuses on whether the wardens believe that the accommodation and support services provided to a random sample of tenants are appropriate at the moment, and whether they expect the tenants' situation to change in future.
5. The strength of this method is that it allows the interviewer to build up a picture of the client population very quickly through talking to a relatively small number of wardens. The obvious weakness is that it lacks any user focus. However CCNAP will suggest to North Lincolnshire Council that some small user research projects are undertaken where the results are confused or where the issues raised suggest that there may be some problems.

¹ These schemes are often called Category 2 schemes – which means they have some communal facilities and warden support. There is one Category 2.5 scheme, or extra care scheme, in North Lincolnshire, where residents can benefit from extra support from a back up team of staff on-site.

6. During November and December, 21 sheltered housing wardens in North Lincolnshire were interviewed. The interviews consisted of three sections. Wardens were asked:
 - factual questions about the housing scheme.
 - questions about a random and unidentified sample of tenants. In each case, the warden was asked about the age and gender of the tenant, about whether they were receiving any support from statutory agencies or from informal sources, about whether the warden viewed the current accommodation and support arrangements to be appropriate and sustainable, and about what the warden felt was most likely to happen in the medium term.
 - wider questions about the role of sheltered housing, the role of the warden, housing management, relationships with other health and social care workers.
7. We aimed to interview all wardens in North Lincolnshire who had been in post for over 6 months, as this would provide the most robust data. In some schemes there was no warden or a new warden had just been appointed. In fact just 1 of the 21 wardens interviewed had been in post for less than 6 months. We interviewed 15 wardens at local authority schemes, and 6 wardens at housing association schemes.
8. During the interviews, wardens were asked to give their views on 267 randomly selected tenants. The warden was asked to speak about people who lived in certain flats, with the flat number picked at random by the interviewer. Seventy-five tenants lived in housing association schemes and 192 lived in local authority schemes. The wardens provided their views about 29% of the total estimated number of sheltered scheme tenants in North Lincolnshire (920).
9. Because we interviewed a high proportion of the wardens in North Lincolnshire, we also achieved a good geographical spread. 108 of the tenants lived in schemes formerly in Scunthorpe, 120 lived in schemes formerly in Glanford and 39 in schemes on the Isle of Axholme.
10. Because of the size and spread of the sample we can be confident that the responses are reasonably representative of the whole sector at a North Lincolnshire level. Therefore in the analysis that follows the survey results are used to estimate the characteristics of all North Lincolnshire tenants in this type of sheltered accommodation.

Summary of Quantitative Results

11. Who is Living in Sheltered Housing?

- Just under 50% of tenants were aged 75-84 and nearly 20% were aged over 85. Almost a quarter were aged 65-75, and 7.1% were under 65.

- 72% of local authority tenants were over 75, compared with 65% of housing association tenants.
- Thirty percent of tenants were men and 70% women. The age profile of the men was younger than that of the women. 11.3% of male tenants were over 85, compared with 23% of female tenants.
- Almost 20% of tenants lived with their spouse or partner. Tenants who lived with a partner were more likely to be under 75, less likely to receive support from statutory agencies, and more likely to be living with appropriate accommodation and support arrangements.
- Just 1.5% of tenants were from an ethnic minority. This is a higher rate than among all North Lincolnshire's over 65 year olds.

12. How Much Support Are They Receiving?

- Almost three-quarters of tenants received no help at all from statutory agencies. 13.1% received up to 7 hours help per week, 9.4% received between 8 and 14 hours per week. Just 2.7% received more than 15 hours help per week.
- Almost one half (46%) of those over 85 received some help. Just 11.2% of those aged 65-74 received some help.
- On average over 65 year olds who live in sheltered housing in North Lincolnshire receive about 4 times as much support from social care services to help them live at home than other over 65 year olds.
- Just 9.7% of tenants have no family or friends capable of providing informal care. 76% of tenants received help from family or paid for help, or both. Almost 13% of tenants had no need of help at the moment.

13. Vacancies and Turnover

- The total vacancy rate was 7.3%. This figure was 4.8% for housing association stock, and 8.2% for the local authority stock.
- Vacancy rates in Scunthorpe (3.6%) and the Isle of Axholme (5.1%) were lower than in the Glanford area (11.3%).
- Over the year preceding the interviews, 13.4% of units had become available due to tenants dying or moving into other forms of accommodation. This suggests an annual supply of about 114 units across all schemes each year on top of existing empty properties.
- Schemes in Scunthorpe had the highest turnover – with 17.7% of units becoming available each year, compared to 7.1% in the Isle of Axholme and 10.9% in schemes in the Glanford area. Housing associations had almost 20% of their tenants die or move away in the year preceding the survey, compared with 11.1% for the local authority.

- Just over 1 in 9 tenants had lived in their homes for less than one year. The rate of new tenants was highest in Scunthorpe (17.1%) and lowest in Glanford (7.9%). Comparing the number of units that became available with the number of new tenants suggests that void rates will have risen in housing association schemes in Scunthorpe, and in all schemes in the Glanford area.
- One in five 'new' tenants had moved into North Lincolnshire to live in a sheltered scheme – about 22 tenants during 1999.

14. Accommodation and Support Appropriate?

- In 8 out of 10 cases, the wardens felt that the accommodation and support arrangements in place were appropriate and that no change was required.
- Wardens felt that 10.9% of current tenants needed more support than they were currently receiving, but that the accommodation was appropriate.
- Nine percent of tenants either planned or wished to move, or the warden thought that they needed to move to other accommodation. Wardens thought that just 3% of tenants needed to move to other accommodation because they couldn't manage in the sheltered scheme.
- Age was the main determinant of whether the accommodation was appropriate or not. None of the under 65s were likely to move out, but 19.1% of over 85s needed or wanted to move to other forms of accommodation. However even among over 85 year olds, 75% were housed and supported appropriately, according to the wardens.
- Using the figures from the survey, we can expect about 80 people in North Lincolnshire to move into other accommodation in the next year (split about 40% into care homes, 40% into other sheltered units and 20% into a community setting).
- Across North Lincolnshire we can estimate that about 86 tenants need more home care support at the moment, and 38 need some form of adaptation to their bedsit / flat.

Summary of Qualitative Results

15. Housing Management Issues.

- Housing association wardens were more likely to take responsibility for sorting out repairs and letting properties. In general, housing association wardens were more satisfied with housing management services because they felt more in control of these services.

- All but one local authority warden was dissatisfied with the allocations system. They complained about a lack of communication with the local housing offices, and said that the system was failing the warden and the tenants.
- Local authority wardens were not routinely involved in letting property – which meant they could be unaware that new tenants had moved in, and were unable to tell the tenant about the facilities and services that could (and could not) be provided within the scheme.
- The local authority wardens expressed very mixed views about repairs. A reasonable proportion of them said that emergency repairs were done well and quickly. However they were much more likely to say that the response to reporting non-emergency repairs was poor and the work slow.

16. Maintenance and Stock Condition

- Most wardens felt that on balance their schemes offered high quality accommodation and support.
- A majority of wardens said that bedsits were outmoded and unpopular. The main reason was a basic lack of space for tenants who often had a lot of furniture and effects.
- The lack of lifts in corridor type schemes and lack of stair lifts in two storey individual unit schemes could cause social isolation for tenants who were growing frailer in upper floor flats. As a result upper floor flats tended to be less popular.
- Almost all the schemes had baths instead of walk in showers. A significant proportion of tenants found it difficult to get into and out of the bath. Although accessing the authorisation of an adaptation through social services appeared straightforward, there were often long delays in getting any work done.

17. The Role of the Warden

- A small number of wardens were able to ensure a division between their work and non-work lives. However most could not.
- For all the local authority wardens and the majority of the housing association wardens the role was a way of life rather than a job. They built up attachments with tenants over time and became an integral part of the scheme.
- As resident wardens are almost always on the scheme when off-duty, they become the provider of last resort in emergencies. They also provide support on an ongoing basis in cases where families and statutory services are unable or unwilling to provide sufficient support.
- The local authority wardens felt they got little recognition of the level of support that they provided.

- The attitude that wardens brought to the role appeared to be a very important factor in the service that tenants received.
- All the wardens interpreted their role in a slightly different way. Those in post for a long time agreed that their role had changed over time as the level of dependency of the tenants increased.
- Some of the wardens were confused over their role within the range of health and social care services. As a group of individuals they did not provide a clear view of the role that they played with their tenants.

18. Support for the Warden

- Most wardens said that they enjoyed their job and felt that sheltered housing had a strong future as a form of accommodation for older people within the community care system.
- Most accepted that some isolation and loneliness was a part of the job, as they came face to face with older tenants who had health and other concerns on a daily basis. Some wardens said that some support from their association or from the Council as their employer was important. Others just wanted to get on with the job, and saw not having much contact with their employer as a benefit.
- Housing association staff painted a generally very positive picture of the level of support and training provided by their associations – either from local or area offices.
- Local authority wardens in Scunthorpe and the Isle of Axholme areas were also positive about the level of support that they received and could expect from the housing department. However in the Glanford area, the wardens were much less happy with the level of contact and support provided by the centre of the organisation.
- A number of the local authority wardens said that they had a range of training needs.

19. Social Services and Health Services

- On the whole, housing association and local authority wardens said that local health and social care services were good and/or improving. There was strong support for the idea of independent living with community based care.
- Some services were more difficult to access than others. The most common problem mentioned by the wardens was that it was difficult to access help with bathing.
- In general the wardens felt that a proportion of their tenants needed more support, in particular with domestic tasks. However they recognised that resources were very limited.

20. Contact with Health and Social Care Staff

- Wardens were confident that they could act as ‘eyes and ears’ on the schemes and were well placed to know when tenants were in need of additional support.
- Almost all had had contact with care managers, although fewer had had any contact with community health staff. The general view was that communication between the wardens and other staff was very limited.
- Very few of the wardens said that they should be routinely involved in assessments carried out by health and social care staff. However they all felt that they could provide useful information and background for care managers who had only a very limited time to meet their clients.
- A large proportion of the wardens felt that care managers did not understand the role played by the warden. Some also said that care managers did not respect the wardens.
- The lack of communication with care managers was seen as a problem. In order to provide a service to the tenants, many said they needed to know what care arrangements had been put in place. Almost all the wardens related instances where they felt that poor assessment had led to the family and/or the warden having to continue to help the tenant cope without any help.
- Wardens saw little evidence that any informal system of reviewing or reassessing tenants worked at all – although formal reviews did take place. People’s health and wellbeing could change rapidly and they felt that they were ideally placed to provide this information, but that their knowledge was wasted.

Summary of Sheltered Housing Provision

21. An audit of specialist housing for older people in North Lincolnshire was published by CCNAP in October 1999². Key facts relating to sheltered housing are reproduced in this section.
- There are 21 Council-owned sheltered housing schemes that have a resident warden on site. These provide 636 units of accommodation.
 - There are 9 sheltered housing schemes owned by Housing Associations, that provide 254 units of accommodation. Seven of these schemes have a resident warden.
 - There are no private sheltered housing schemes.
 - Together, housing association and local authority sheltered housing schemes provide 890 units of accommodation. This is equivalent to 35 units for every 1000 people aged 65 & over in North Lincolnshire.

² Audit of Specialist Housing Provision and Benchmarking Exercise.

- North Lincolnshire's six most similar local authorities³ have on average 60% more of this type of accommodation. This Audit Commission group of 'near neighbours' have on average 56 units per 1000 people aged 65 & over.
- In October 1999, 93.2% of local authority sheltered housing was occupied, compared with 96.5% of the housing association stock.
- The local authority schemes are widely spread around the authority. The rural parts of the authority tend to have a higher level of provision per head of population than the Scunthorpe area.

Estimated Total Number of Tenants

22. The survey allows an improved estimate of the total number of tenants living in sheltered housing to be produced. Across the 21 schemes, there were 651 tenants in 632 units of accommodation - a ratio of 1.03 per unit. Applying this to the 890 units of accommodation suggests a total population across North Lincolnshire of 920. We estimate that there were 645 local authority tenants and 275 housing association tenants. This estimate assumes that the average void rate (and the proportion of couples) in schemes which were not visited was the same as in schemes that were.

Population Profile – Who is Living in Sheltered Housing?

Age Profile

23. Just under 50% of the tenants were aged between 75 & 84. Nearly 20% were aged over 85. Almost one in four were aged 65-74. Just 7.1% were aged below 65.
24. By applying the results to the estimated 920 total population, we can suggest that there are 180 tenants aged over 85, 458 aged 75-84, 217 aged 65-74, and 65 aged under 65.
25. The age profile varied slightly in different types of scheme and in different areas. The table and figures that follow show the age profile of tenants, broken down by type of scheme, and by area of the authority (former districts). These are not used to estimate any sub-population figures.

³ According to the Audit Commission's Nearest Neighbours model, North Lincolnshire is compared with Telford & Wrekin, Darlington, Warrington, Wakefield, Peterborough and York local authorities.

Table 1: Age Profile of Tenants, by Scheme Type and by Area

	All	Local Authority	Housing Association	Glanford	Isle of Axholme	Scunthorpe
Sample Size	267	192	75	120	39	108
Under 65	7.1%	5.2%	12.0%	2.5%	12.8%	10.2%
65-74	23.6%	22.9%	25.3%	28.3%	10.3%	23.1%
75-84	49.8%	51.6%	45.3%	45.0%	64.1%	50.0%
85 & over	19.5%	20.3%	17.3%	24.2%	12.8%	16.7%

Figure 1: Percentage of Tenants Aged 75 & Over

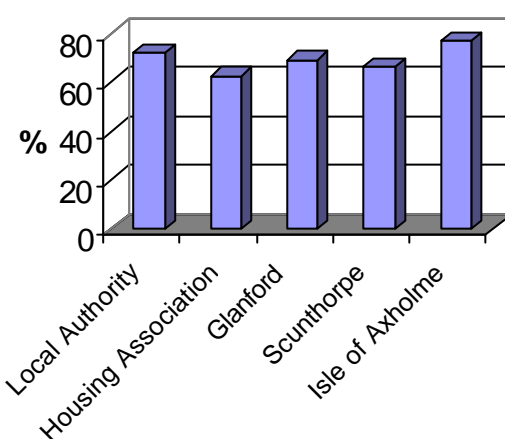
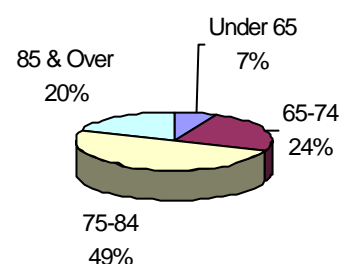


Figure 2: Proportion of Tenants By Age Band



26. Tenants in local authority schemes were more likely to be over 75 than their housing association counterparts. Schemes located in the Glanford area have the highest proportion of tenants aged over 85, and the lowest proportion aged under 65. However there appears to be only small variation between areas and between areas and the authority average.

Gender

27. Thirty percent of tenants were male and 70% female. This would suggest that 276 men lived in sheltered housing in North Lincolnshire and 644 women.
28. A higher proportion of men lived in housing association schemes (35% of tenants) compared with local authority schemes (28% of tenants).
29. The age profile of the male tenants appeared to be significantly younger than that of the women. 11.3% of men were aged under 65

compared to 5.3% of the women. 33.8% of the men were aged 65-74 compared with 19.3% of the women. In the older two age-groups the situation was reversed, with the proportion of women aged 85 & over twice that of the men (23% compared with 11.3%).

Singles and Couples

30. Partners are a key source of practical and personal mutual support. On a number of occasions wardens said that while couples had families, their support was not needed as the partners looked after each other. 19.4% of tenants lived in couples and 80.3% were single. Across the 21 schemes, 10% of units were occupied by couples. We can use this information to estimate that 90 couples are living in sheltered accommodation in North Lincolnshire, and 740 single people.
31. The rate of couples living in sheltered schemes was highest in the Isle of Axholme (28.8% of tenants lived with a partner) and lowest in Glanford (12.6% of tenants).
32. There was much less variation in the proportion of couples living in housing association and local authority schemes. 22.8% of housing association tenants lived with a partner, compared with 18% of local authority tenants.
33. Tenants with partners were likely to be younger (41.3% under 75, compared with 28.5% of single people). They were also less likely to receive support from statutory agencies (78.3% received no support, compared with 73.8% of single people) and wardens were more likely to say that couples' accommodation and support was appropriate (84.8% of people with partners compared with 79.2% for single people).

Ethnicity

34. The ethnicity of 98.5% of the randomly selected tenants was described as 'white UK'. Just 4 of the 267 sample were not. Of these 2 were described as white of European origin, one was black of Caribbean origin, and the other was of unknown ethnicity. This figure is in line with the authority's total ethnic minority population (1.6% in the 1991 Census). However among people aged 65 & over, the ethnic minority population was just 0.4% in 1991.

Wardens' Views on Population

35. Wardens were asked generally about the group of tenants in the schemes where they lived. The wardens who had been in the job for a long period talked about the schemes having a residue of long term or original tenants who had grown old along with the scheme. While this helped to give the community some permanency and homeliness, it could also cause problems. Many of the problems with the schemes were due to buildings and a support service designed for one group of

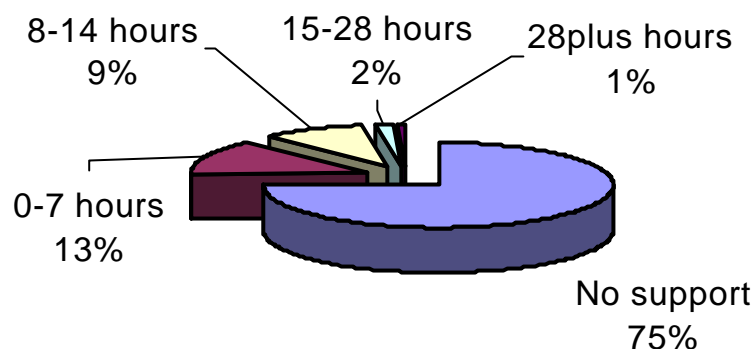
people (fit and active elderly), now accommodating a higher proportion of older and frailer elderly people.

36. Wardens recognised that the accommodation could be appropriate for most older and frailer people IF SUFFICIENT SUPPORT WAS PROVIDED. As a group they were keen that people were supported to live independently as long as possible. However they also felt that tenants and their families or carers had to be realistic about what sheltered housing could provide. The general consensus was that Category 2 sheltered housing was not appropriate for very dependent people, and that dementia problems caused the greatest difficulties for tenants and wardens. The warden at Anchor Trust's April Lodge scheme was confident that the extra facilities provided in that very new building did mean they could provide a home for life.
37. Most wardens felt unwilling or unable to generalise about there having been an increase in the level of dependency among new tenants. The couple that did, suggested that people moving in tended to be older than in the past. However the factual responses that wardens provided neither supports nor undermines this argument. Just over 55% of those who had moved into local authority schemes in the last 3 years were over 75, compared with 71.9% of all local authority tenants. Housing associations are no different, with 45% of 'new' tenants aged over 75, compared with 62.6% of all housing association tenants. A later section discusses how wardens perceive their role within the social and health care system, and how they think others see sheltered housing.

Support

38. Given the relatively short time available during the interview, wardens were not asked detailed questions about the type of support that tenants received. Such questioning may not have been valid anyway, as wardens may have been unaware of all the services being provided by other agencies to all the tenants. This is an issue picked up in the section 'Contact with Health and Social Care Staff'. Questions were restricted to whether the tenant was receiving regular help from a statutory social care or health care agency.
39. Almost three-quarters of tenants received no help at all from statutory agencies. 13.1% received up to 7 hours help per week from statutory agencies, 9.4% received between 8 and 14 hours per week, 2% received between 15 and 28 hours per week and 0.7% received over 28 hours per week. Those in the latter two categories received day services at local authority centres.
40. Overall, 25.1% of the sample received some form of care or support. Applied to the total estimated number of tenants in this form of housing in North Lincolnshire, we suggest that 230 tenants receive help from statutory health or social care agencies.

Figure 3: Tenants Receiving Services from Statutory Agencies (hours per week)



41. There was a variation in the proportion of tenants in different age bands who received help. The age group who received least help were those aged 65-74. Just 11% of these tenants received any support. This is compared with 24% of those aged 75-84 and 46% of those aged 85 & over. This finding is in line with national figures which show a much higher take up and use of services from those aged 85 and over. In this case, 36% of all those receiving some help are over 85, a group that makes up only 20% of tenants.

Table 2: Level of Support, by Age Group.

	All Ages	Under 65	65-74	75-84	85 plus
Sample Size	267	19	63	133	52
No care	74.5%	78.9%	88.9%	75.2%	53.8%
0-7 hours	13.1%	10.5%	4.8%	12.8%	25.0%
8-14 hours	9.4%	0	3.2%	9.0%	21.2%
15 plus hours	2.6%	10.6%	3.2%	2.3%	0

42. About four times as many over 65 year olds living in sheltered housing received help from social care services to live independently than the total population of over-65 year olds in North Lincolnshire. According to the PAF statistics for March 1999, 64 per 1000 over 65 year olds

were helped to live at home at March 1999, compared with 254 per 1000 over 65s in North Lincolnshire sheltered housing.

43. Among the small number of tenants aged under 65 in the survey, 21% received help from statutory agencies. A proportion of those aged under-65 in sheltered schemes are physically disabled or have mental health problems or are older people with a mild learning disability. Others are fit and agile but feel that they want to move into this type of provision before they need to. A third group are younger partners of people over 65 who may or may not have health or mobility problems.
44. National sources have suggested that using sheltered accommodation for other client groups can cause problems for existing tenants. For example, in Telford & Wrekin (one of North Lincolnshire's near neighbour authorities), 50% of tenants who responded to a tenant survey said they would be unhappy about sharing the scheme with disabled people and 65% said the same about sharing the scheme with people who had dementia. 88% of the Telford & Wrekin sample of tenants said they thought sheltered housing worked best for people in relatively good health. However none of the North Lincolnshire wardens interviewed who had people with a physical disability or learning disability living in the scheme said that this had caused problems for or among the other tenants. People with dementia and people with alcohol problems were those most likely to cause problems for other tenants and the wardens. In terms of mixing age groups, the wardens were more likely to suggest that a mix was desirable, as younger tenants were more likely to provide social cohesion on the scheme and improve community spirit, as well as providing the warden with much needed help on occasions. It would be perfectly possible to organise a tenant survey to explore these and other issues.
45. Many tenants also received informal support from relatives, or purchased help from private agencies, or both. This was the first question to reveal a weakness in the methodology, as wardens were unsure of whether family or private agencies provided support in 42% of cases. However if the 'don't knows' are disregarded, then 52.9% of tenants had family which were judged able to provide support, 18.7% bought services of one kind or another from private agencies, and 5.8% got help from both private agencies and family. 9.7% of tenants have no one to provide any informal care, while in 12.9% of cases wardens said that the tenant had no need of any support at present. As with people in other types of accommodation, informal support from families and relatives meets a very large slice of the total need for support.
46. Just 13 of the 267 tenants (4.9%) received no support from statutory agencies and had no informal support to fall back on if necessary.

Wardens Views on Support Issues

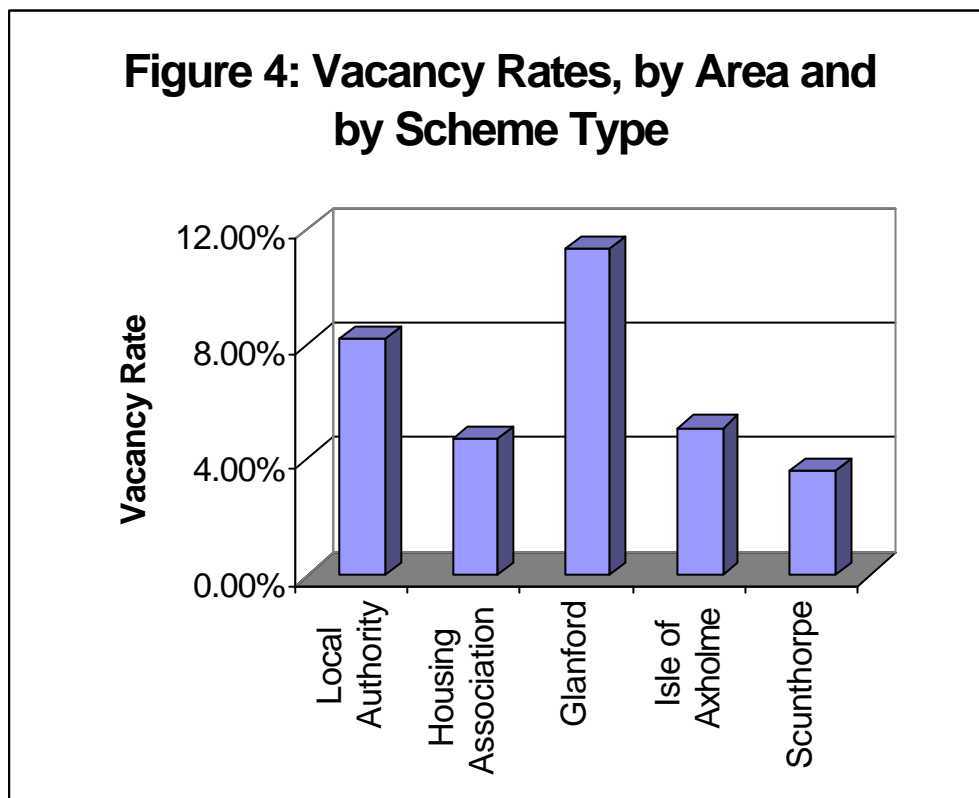
47. Wardens enthusiastically agreed that the aim of independent living could be met through sheltered housing where sufficient support was provided. However there were mixed views on whether appropriate

and sufficient levels of support were available in all cases – not just from statutory services but from the mix of statutory, private and informal care. Almost all of the wardens were able to provide examples of when the mix of informal, private and statutory support was insufficient. The general feeling was that too often the level of statutory support was insufficient. This led on to a discussion of the warden's role when a very frail tenant is left to cope without enough support.

48. Almost all the wardens were concerned that a number of families were unable or unwilling to provide support. A small number of the wardens mentioned cases where the family had 'put their relative into the scheme and forgotten about them'. These wardens suggested that many families and other members of the public thought that sheltered housing was like a care home, with the warden able to provide 24-hour cover. A couple of the local authority wardens made a direct link between this and the fact that the allocations system meant they did not as a matter of course meet and talk to prospective tenants and/or their families.
49. As a result, wardens said that they could become the provider of last resort. Clearly because all but one of the wardens live on-site, they are well placed to respond quickly to an out of hours emergency. The point was made more than once that this would be acceptable if this work was recognised. However a high percentage of the local authority wardens said that often this activity was not recognised and wardens got little recognition for providing an often stressful emergency service. On the other hand, they generally suggested that they had not taken the job for the money but to provide care, and that they accepted this was part of the warden's role.
50. Apart from incidents when they were called on to provide emergency response, many of the wardens spoke about occasions when some tenants and families struggled to access appropriate support from G.P.s, social services and community health services. In many cases this struggle to cope meant that the warden became involved in providing support services on an ongoing basis. In other words when the care managers and health care workers cannot organise sufficient support, the tenant has to cope and falls back on whoever is available. If the family can't do enough then the warden has to fill the gap. Most of the wardens suggested that some tenants had gone beyond the level of dependency that could be managed within the scheme.
51. There was a variable range of enthusiasm for residential care. Some wardens argued that people went downhill very quickly in residential settings because they lost the mental stimulation involved in living independently. Others urged a more realistic assessment of what very frail people could achieve in their own home with support. Others focused on the loneliness of some of their tenants, for whom the warden's morning visit might be the only one of the day. A later section concentrates on the warden's role in more detail.

Supply Issues

52. The survey allows us to produce estimates of the likely supply of sheltered accommodation available at present and to suggest how much will become available over the next year. The vacancy level in the 21 schemes visited was 7.3%. This figure was 4.7% for housing associations and 8.2% for the local authority. A more marked variation was between areas of the authority, with 11.3% of units in the former Glanford area vacant, compared with 5.1% in the Isle of Axholme and just 3.6% in Scunthorpe.



53. A second source of supply came from those tenants who either moved out or died in the 12 months prior to the interview date. Across the 21 schemes, 47 people had died and 38 people moved out in the year before the interview. This suggests that 13.4% of units in these 21 schemes had become available over that period. Across the entire stock of 890 units, this suggests that 119 units would have become available at some point in the preceding year.
54. The proportion of properties becoming available through tenants either moving on or dying is highest in Scunthorpe (which also has the lowest snapshot void rate), where 17.7% of units became available during the year. The proportion was lowest in the Isle of Axholme (7.1% became available). The turnover also varied by type of provider, with a rate of 19.9% for housing association stock and 11.1% for the local authority

stock. These figures suggest that housing associations find it easier to let their stock than the local authority, and that Scunthorpe is the easiest area to let. Only one housing association scheme is situated outside the Scunthorpe area.

55. All but one of the schemes in Glanford is owned by the local authority. These are fairly stable schemes, with 1 unit in 9 becoming available during the previous year through tenants moving or dying. However they also have the highest void rate of 11.3%. This is the area where the Council appears to have a problem of oversupply.

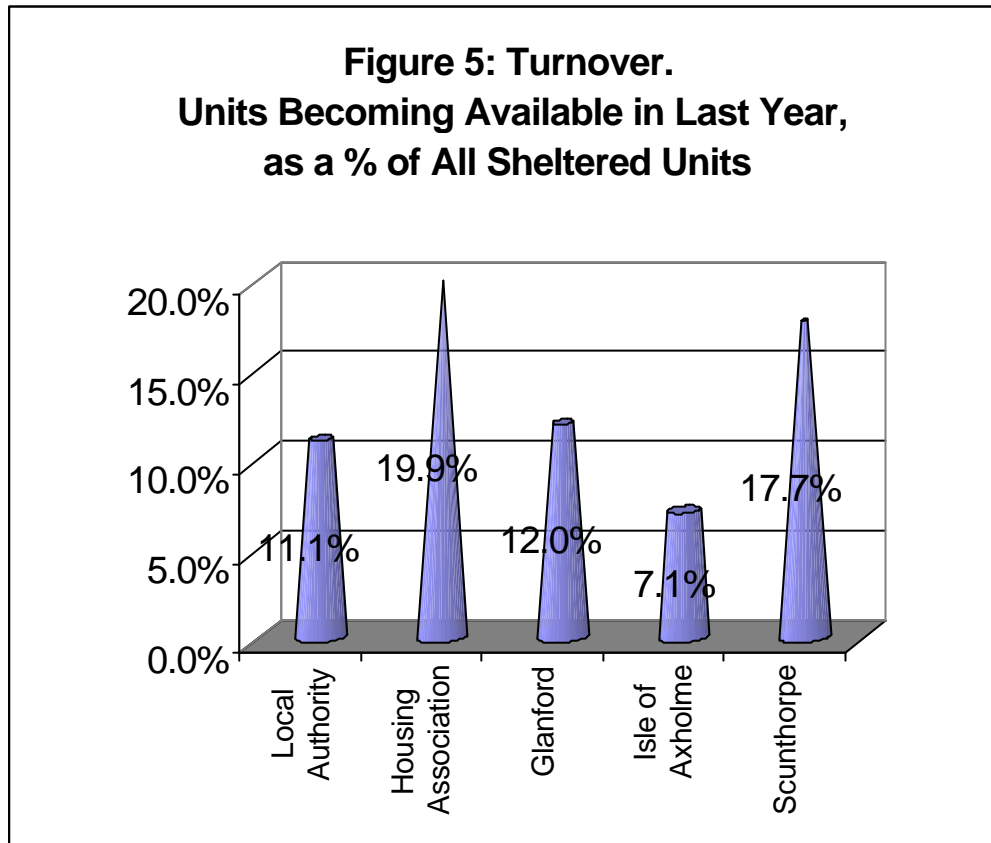


Table 3: Comparison of Void Rates and Turnover Rates

	Scheme Type	Number of Schemes	Snapshot Void Rate	Turnover in 12 months
Scunthorpe	LA	3	3.8%	15.1%
	HA	5	3.5%	19.6%
Glanford	LA	9	11.3%	10.9%
Isle	LA	3	5.1%	7.1%
Total	LA/HA	21	7.3%	13.4%

56. Wardens were asked how long their tenants had lived in the scheme. Almost 65% of the 267 tenants had lived in the scheme for over 3 years (in many cases for significantly more than 3 years), and a further 24% had lived in the scheme for between 1 and 3 years. Just over 11% of tenants had moved into the schemes in the last year (we estimate new tenants occupying 11.6% of properties). This can be compared with the estimate of 13.4% of units becoming available in the preceding year – which suggests that the overall void rate has increased in the last year.
57. Table 4 compares the estimated proportion of units occupied by ‘new’ tenants (under 1 year) with the turnover or supply of property, by scheme type and area. Where the proportion of ‘new’ tenants exceeds turnover, the void rate is likely to have fallen. This has happened in local authority property in Scunthorpe and on the Isle of Axholme. However the schemes in Glanford, and housing association schemes in Scunthorpe had a lower proportion of new tenants than tenants moving out, so void rates will have risen over the preceding year.

Table 4: Comparison of New Tenants and Turnover Rates

	Scheme Type	Number of Schemes	Units* Occupied by New Tenants in 12 Months	Turnover in 12 months
Scunthorpe	LA	3	18.4%	15.1%
	HA	5	16.0%	19.6%
	LA/HA	8	17.1%	17.7%
Glanford	LA	9	7.1%	10.9%
	LA/HA	10	7.9%	12.0%
Isle	LA	3	8.6%	7.1%
Total	LA/HA	21	11.6%	13.4%

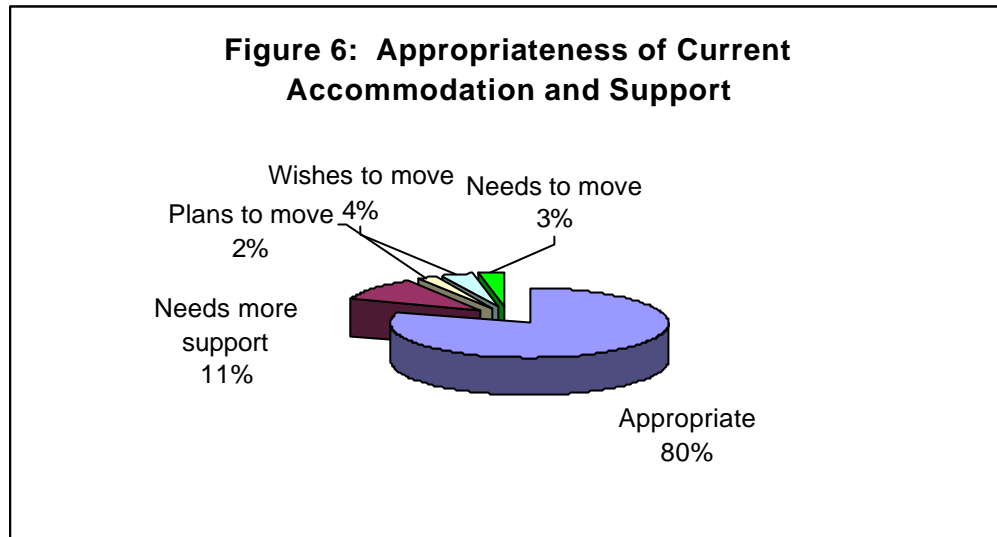
*Estimate based on survey results

58. 77% of ‘new’ tenants (those moving in in the preceding year) had moved in from their own homes – 80% of these had been living alone, and 20% had been living with someone else. Just under 10% of new tenants had transferred from a different sheltered scheme, while about 3% had moved in from a care home.
59. One in five of all tenants had moved into the accommodation from outside North Lincolnshire. Of the tenants who had moved in in the last year, 75% came from the North Lincolnshire area, while 25% came from outside the area. This suggests about 22 new tenants moved into the schemes from outside North Lincolnshire in 1999.

Accommodation and Support Arrangements

60. This section describes what wardens said about the appropriateness of the accommodation and support arrangements for the sample of tenants. This section of the survey is aimed at producing estimates of the level of need experienced by tenants for support and for accommodation, both now and in the next 12 months.
61. Each warden was asked a screening question about each tenant chosen. They were asked to say which of the following statements was most appropriate in each case. The answers were a subjective assessment based on the warden's ongoing contact with the tenant, often over a significant period of time.
- The tenant's current accommodation and support arrangements are appropriate, no change has been requested and you don't think the tenant needs to move.
 - The tenants needs additional support now in their current accommodation.
 - The tenant has definite plans to move.
 - The tenants has expressed a wish to move.
 - The tenant has not expressed a wish to move, but you think the tenant needs to move.
62. Wardens were asked to think about the next 3 to 5 years. While they were generally confident about their responses for the next year, many were much less happy to say what was more or less likely to happen over the following years. For this reason, this report will focus on suggesting a one year likely need for support and different types of accommodation. At a later date, when similar surveys have been completed with care managers and care home managers/ matrons, we will estimate 3 or 5 year projections of support and accommodation needs.
63. In 214 cases (80.1%) the wardens suggested that the tenant's current accommodation and support arrangements were adequate and that no change was required. In a further 29 cases (10.9%) the warden felt that the tenant required more support than was currently being provided by the mix of statutory, private and informal agencies. However the wardens felt that these tenants and their informal carers could continue to cope if necessary. Taken together, these responses suggest that 91% of tenants in sheltered schemes have accommodation that wardens felt was appropriate to their needs at present.

64. A majority of the wardens stressed that many tenants were unwilling to ask for help from statutory agencies. The interviewer asked the wardens to answer regardless of whether the tenant would be willing to ask, accept or pay for some help.



65. Nine percent of the 267 tenants that we asked about either wanted, planned or needed to move. This suggests that about 80 tenants in sheltered accommodation are inappropriately housed or dissatisfied with their housing.
66. Of those that planned, wished or needed to move, 3.7% had expressed a wish to move, 2.2% planned to move and 3% needed to move, according to the warden. The latter category gave wardens most cause for concern, as they were a group for whom statutory and informal support services were not providing sufficient help.
67. Tables 5 & 6 show how the responses to the screening question varied by area, by type of scheme, and by age. The biggest difference was between areas of the authority. Almost all the tenants who wardens felt needed to move lived in schemes in the former Glanford area. There was little apparent variation between local authority and housing association tenants. The over 85s are most likely to be those who need to move, rather than receive more support to help them stay in the sheltered accommodation. Once the data is sub-divided, the level of confidence one can have in it is reduced.
68. Figure 7 uses the figures described in this section to estimate the likely numbers of tenants needing more support and a move out of sheltered accommodation in the next year.

Table 5: Appropriateness of Accommodation and Support, by Scheme Type and Area

	All		Local Authority	Housing Association	Glanford	Isle of Axholme	Scunthorpe
Sample Size	267		192	75	120	39	108
Appropriate	80.1%		81.3%	77.3%	75.8%	89.7%	81.5%
Needs more support	10.9%		10.4%	12.0%	10.0%	10.3%	12.0%
Wishes to move	2.2%		2.1%	2.7%	3.3%	0	1.9%
Plans to move	3.7%		3.1%	5.3%	5.0%	0	3.7%
Needs to move	3.0%		3.1%	2.7%	5.8%	0	0.9%

Table 6: Appropriateness of Accommodation and Support, by Age

	All		Under 65	65-74	75-84	85 and Over
Sample Size	267		19	63	133	52
Appropriate	80.1%		94.7%	79.4%	80.5%	75.0%
Needs more support	10.9%		5.3%	12.7%	12.8%	5.8%
Wishes to move	2.2%		0	1.6%	2.3%	3.8%
Plans to move	3.7%		0	4.8%	3.8%	3.8%
Needs to move	3.0%		0	1.6%	0.8%	11.5%

Current Accommodation Appropriate – for How Long?

69. Wardens said that 80% of tenants were appropriately housed and supported at present. They were then asked whether in these cases, tenants would be likely either to need to move or to need more support in the next year, or over the next 3 to 5 years.
70. The vast majority (95.8%) of those whose current situation was appropriate would be unlikely to need to move in the next 3 to 5 years. Most wardens found it difficult to assess the future needs of their tenants. This was partly because they were unsure about what might happen, but also because many had built up a relationship with the

Figure 7: Estimates of Future Accommodation and Support Needs

Total Estimated Tenants:
920
Of which:

Current Situation Appropriate 738	More Support Needed 100	Plans to Move 20	Wishes to Move 34	Needs to Move 28
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Changes
Needed
Now /
Year 1

Care Support	62
Care Support & Adaptations	24
Adaptations	14

Care Home	13
Other Sheltered	27
Community Setting	13

Care Home	18
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Changes
Needed in
Years 2-5

Care Home	25
Other Sheltered	4
Care Support	151
Care Support & Adaptations	7
Adaptations	4

Care Home	10
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tenants and did not want to think of them deteriorating. However they said that 1.4% of tenants would be likely to need to move out within 1-3 years, and 2.3% would be likely to need to move out in 3-5 years. In another 0.5% of cases the warden could not provide a response. Applied to all the sheltered stock, an estimated 29 tenants would find that they needed to move out in the next 1-5 years.

71. In 87.5% of cases where the current situation was appropriate but a move was deemed likely in the next 5 years, the move would be to a more supported care home setting. In the other 12.5% of cases the move would be from an upstairs to a downstairs flat within the same scheme (i.e. the tenant's flat would become unsuitable over time because the tenant wouldn't be able to get downstairs).
72. Far more of those whose current situation was deemed appropriate would be likely to need more support in their current home to ensure that it remained suitable for them. 22.4% of people in this situation would likely need some more support in the medium term (20.1% in the next 3 years and 2.3% in 3-5 years).
73. Almost all of these cases of more support being required in the medium term will be people needing a care support package – personal support or domestic support such as cleaning, laundry or shopping. 92% of this small sub-group will need care support, while 4% will need adaptations as well as care support. 2% of this group will need adaptations as the only change, while 2% will need care related specifically to health problems.

More Support Needed in Current Accommodation

74. One in nine tenants (10.9%) needed additional support in their current accommodation. As with those who were likely to need support in the medium term, the majority needed a package of care in their home. 25 tenants (9.3% of all tenants) needed some additional care and 4 needed equipment and/or adaptations. Of those needing care, 60% needed help equivalent to 7 hours per week and 28% needed help equivalent to 8-14 hours per week (described by wardens as a full care package of 3 visits per day plus meals). Wardens suggested that 3 tenants (12% of those needing more support) needed over 15 hours help per week. These were tenants who the warden felt needed some day care in an alternative setting.
75. Across North Lincolnshire's sheltered housing, this suggests that 86 tenants need more home care support at the moment, and about 38 need immediate adaptations or equipment to make the accommodation suitable.

Tenants Likely to Move

76. One in eleven current tenants either planned, wished or needed to move. Taken as a proportion of the total estimated number of tenants, this means that around 80 tenants are likely to move. This section will suggest where and when these tenants might be likely to move to.
77. Six tenants had made definite plans to move, and 10 had expressed a wish to move. We will take these tenants together, as in both cases they have realised that their current accommodation is no longer appropriate for whatever reason. Table 7 sets out the reasons for wishing to move, and the type of accommodation being sought.

Table 7: Voluntary Movers – Desired Locations and Reasons for Moving.

Location Desired		Reason for Move	
Other sheltered scheme	7	More supported setting	5
Residential home	4	Want nearer family	4
Own home alone	2	Current housing unsuitable	3
Home with another person	2	Want a different area	3
Extra care scheme	1	Live independently	1

78. There are a limited number of reasons why these tenants plan or wish to move. Half wished to remain within the sheltered sector – with one looking for a more supported sheltered environment. However when asked why this individual had not attempted to access the only scheme in North Lincolnshire that could provide more support the warden said that this was not seen as an extra care scheme since meals were not available. One quarter of those seeking a move would chose to enter a care home for more support. The other quarter wanted to move to less supported accommodation, either on their own or with another person. Reasons given for this choice range from a desire to live more independently, to wanting to be near family or live in a different area. We should note that the three tenants who found their housing unsuitable were all living upstairs and were seeking a move to ground floor accommodation within a different sheltered scheme.
79. In addition to the 16 tenants that wardens said were wanting or planning to move, a further 8 were said to need to move. These tenants were all felt to need a move to more supported settings in care homes (5 in residential and 3 in nursing homes). For three of these tenants the wardens suggest that an immediate move would be most appropriate. A move in the next year was needed by 2 of the tenants, while the other 3 needed a move within the next three years. Seven of

the eight tenants that wardens said would need to move were likely to bring an extra financial cost to the statutory agencies when they moved into a care home.

Future Accommodation and Care Needs of Current Tenants.

80. Figure 7 summarises the likely accommodation and support needs of current tenants over the next year and then over the next 4 years after that. This suggests that 86 tenants need more support now and 38 tenants need adaptations now, and 18 tenants need to move into the more supported setting provided by a care home now. Over the next year 13 tenants aim to move into a care home and 27 will be trying to move to a different dwelling within a sheltered scheme. 13 other tenants are aiming to move back into the community.
81. As time goes on there will clearly be many more moves than that suggested in figure 7, based on the wardens' responses. The estimates for years 1-5 are estimates of the number of moves and changes that can be foreseen by wardens given their current knowledge. The full Pathways Housing 5-year projection of likely future moves will be calculated once care managers and care home managers/matrons interviews have been completed.

Other Issues

82. Part of each interview was a discussion about issues related to the warden's role and the role played by sheltered housing within the gamut of health and social care services. Some of the themes from the discussions have already been mentioned. This last section of the report describes the themes that emerged.
83. There is a great diversity in the age, physical attribute, facilities and location of schemes, and each group of tenants brings its own challenges and satisfactions. Wardens mostly work alone and bring their own perceptions, beliefs and prejudices to what they say. Therefore readers should not attach the same degree of confidence to the discussion themes as they do to the quantitative figures. However undertaking 21 interviews (a large proportion of all wardens) ensures that the themes that emerge strongest are the most current across the sector.
84. Tenants, their families and others who visit tenants on a professional basis will have different perceptions of the issues discussed within this section. This report cannot shed any light on how tenants view the wardens and how other health and care staff view the wardens and the role played by the warden. The planned Pathways Research with Care Managers in North Lincolnshire will pick up the latter topic. It would be necessary to undertake a survey of tenants and their carers to complete the picture of and get a fuller understanding of sheltered housing.

85. The discussions were semi-structured. The interviewer asked all the wardens about a set number of topics, but they had the chance to raise any issues and concerns within those broad topics. Many of the issues were common to all the wardens in all the areas. However a number of things were specific to a particular group – e.g. to those working in one part of the authority, or to the local authority wardens. Some of the issues raised have also been raised in national debate.

Housing Management Issues – Allocations and Repairs

86. Although an exploration of these issues was not the initial aim of the research, it was the subject that produced the strongest response in early interviews with the local authority wardens, and so the interviewer focused on it in the rest of the interviews. Housing association wardens were much less likely to talk about housing management issues.
87. The majority of housing association wardens / scheme managers felt they had an advantage over their local authority counterparts. Each housing association is organised differently and each gives its wardens a greater or lesser degree of control over housing management issues. However in general, housing association wardens have more say and more control over the running of their scheme. Hence the title scheme manager replacing warden in a number of the associations. The effect of this different role shows up most obviously in the way property is let. All the housing association wardens were involved in helping to let vacant dwellings. In most cases this included dealing with maintenance and decoration issues. In some cases the warden was also involved in assessing the suitability of potential tenants for the accommodation, and the accommodation for the tenant. None of the housing association wardens told stories about new tenants moving into the scheme before meeting the warden.
88. Some of the housing association wardens were also responsible for managing repairs. As such they did not see repairs as a problem. The housing association wardens that did not manage repairs themselves did not say that getting repairs carried out had caused any difficulties. Overall housing association wardens were satisfied with housing management services, and satisfaction was strongest where they were directly responsible for providing these services.
89. Local authority wardens have no responsibility for managing allocations or repairs. These are managed through local housing offices. Levels of satisfaction varied between wardens and between areas, but the overall impression was dissatisfaction with the repairs system and great dissatisfaction and frustration with the way that the allocations system worked.
90. Local authority wardens are not as a matter of course involved in the letting of a flat on their scheme. This is carried out by the local housing officer, who visits the flat or bedsit with the prospective tenant. Wardens across Scunthorpe, Glanford and the Isle of Axholme all said

that communication with the lettings staff was poor. None said that allocations worked well at present.

91. Informal links with the housing officer was important. One of the wardens in the Glanford area said that she made it her business to meet the prospective tenants and introduce them to the scheme. This was possible because she had built up a working relationship with the local housing officer. This warden said that she could try to 'sell the scheme' to prospective tenants. Empty bedsits on her scheme were unattractive, but she was able to show prospective tenants into a furnished bedsit that looked very attractive, with the permission of one of the other tenants. One of the wardens on the Isle of Axholme said that she had had a good working relationship with a previous housing officer who had a lot of experience and local knowledge. However a new housing officer had not visited in six months and so she felt that the allocation system had broken down.
92. All the local authority wardens said that they should at least meet prospective tenants and show them the facilities on the scheme and explain what tenants could and could not expect. A number suggested that the system was less successful than those that had operated by Glanford and Boothferry Councils. Some examples of comments include:

'Allocations are terrible ... people are left to look round themselves.' (LA Warden, Glanford area)

'Allocations is hopeless ... much better with the previous system. New tenants should be able to meet the warden.' (LA Warden, Scunthorpe)

'No communications with allocations. I have to figure out who new tenants are.' (LA Warden, Glanford area.)

'No communication from allocations. The older system was much better. Now tenants can get the wrong impression of the warden's role.' (LA Warden Scunthorpe)

93. A number of the wardens suggested that this had posed a security problem for them. Because they don't meet prospective tenants, they had on occasions been unaware that an empty flat had been let, until they saw someone moving in, or until they saw that a light was on. They also suggested that it could cause problems for the new tenant. Apart from not being welcoming, the new tenants could have misunderstood the service and level of support offered by sheltered

housing and sheltered wardens. They were not convinced that housing officers knew what went on within the schemes.

94. The pattern of dissatisfaction with the repairs service was more mixed. A number of the wardens said they were happy with action taken when emergency repairs were reported. One felt the emergency repair service was excellent. Others were not so complimentary – suggesting that even emergency repairs could be slow. However, they were much less likely to be satisfied with non-emergency repairs. Even those local authority wardens who said that emergency repairs were good, were dissatisfied with the response to reporting standard repairs. Just one of the wardens said that she felt the whole repairs system was improving and that the workmen were good. A number of the wardens felt very strongly on the issue. For example:

'Repairs are poor ...staff always blame the computer and don't care...got to fight to get work done.' (L.A. Warden, Isle of Axholme)

'Repairs terrible ...you have to fight for whatever needed ... out of sight out of mind.' (L.A. Warden, Isle of Axholme)

'Workmen come out with no information – causes a problem for the warden.' (L.A. Warden, Scunthorpe)

Emergency repairs get done, but you have to chase up all standard repairs.' (L.A. Warden, Glanford area)

95. Wardens in the former Glanford area reported the most problems in getting standard repairs carried out in good time. One of the Glanford wardens despaired that there was so little communication with the local office on repairs as on other services.
96. Every service makes an occasional mistake, and interviewees in this type of interview are more likely to highlight occasions when services went wrong than when they were satisfied. In addition the wardens may take a different view than the tenants about the speed and efficiency of the repairs service and their experience of how they were allocated their property. However the strength of feeling on the theme of poor allocations and repairs from the local authority wardens was very clear.

Housing Benefit

97. There was much less focus on benefits. Many wardens said that they left this issue (and all finance issues) to the tenants and the family as

much as possible. Most felt that they would be unable to provide sound advice. Some of the wardens were uncomfortable about handling any money at all within the scheme, to avoid any possibility of misunderstanding over petty cash / tea kitty funds.

98. One of the local authority wardens complained bitterly about the benefit system, and in particular about the benefit office. She felt that her local office was designed to intimidate customers. She said that customers using this office were forced to explain their financial circumstances to other waiting customers as well as to the staff, due to poor layout.
99. A number of the housing association wardens mentioned that they found housing benefit administration to be very poor. One of these wardens made the point that although her association understood the problem and was able to wait for payment, delays in payment could cause a great deal of distress to tenants. This was particularly the case for older people, as many wardens said that it was very important to some older people to know that they owed nothing, almost to the point of becoming obsessive on the issue.
100. One of the housing association scheme managers said that she organised an annual session for benefits staff to visit the scheme to deal with questions, applications and queries from tenants. This was very successful. As such it could obviously act as a model for other services.

Maintenance and Stock Condition Issues

101. Many of the housing association and local authority wardens were happy with the standard and condition of accommodation and facilities that their scheme provided. In common with most home-owners or tenants, they were all able to make a few comments and complaints. However, some of the wardens were extremely unhappy at the standard and condition of the schemes. On this issue in particular, individual comments reflect problems unique to particular schemes. There is a huge range of types, ages and locations of schemes within North Lincolnshire. For this reason I will limit the general comments here to a few themes that came up time and again (and which are common to the national debate), and then provide some individual quotes that show some of the particular problems that were being experienced.
102. A large majority of wardens felt that the bed-sit design was outmoded. Older people tended to have significant amounts of furniture and other items, which would not fit into the space available. While some bed-sits were larger than others and some had better outlooks, the common theme was a lack of space. Bed-sits in rural areas were hard to let, particularly those upstairs in schemes with no lifts.
103. A number of wardens in internal (corridor) schemes that didn't have lifts expressed bewilderment at why such accommodation had ever been built. For example a local authority scheme built as late as 1987 lacked a lift. Perhaps this suggests that the building had been

designed for active elderly people and now housed a much higher proportion of frail elderly people. Lack of lifts could lead to social isolation for those tenants who lived upstairs who grew more frail. Many of the tenants that wished to move out of their flats wanted ground floor accommodation within the same scheme, although this was generally thought to be difficult to organise. One warden said that if the system was not flexible enough to allow easy transfers from upper floor to ground floor flats within a scheme then it wasn't surprising that upper floor flats tended to stay empty for longer.

104. The most common problem mentioned by both local authority and housing association wardens was that baths caused problems for older and more immobile tenants. This was a greater problem in schemes that had frailer and a more dependent group of tenants. Many tenants were unable to either get into or out of their bath. Showers over baths were not thought to solve this problem. This problem was not helped by a perceived lack of assisted bathing as a gap in provision. In practically all schemes some of the tenants had accessed an adapted walk in shower. Most wardens said that it had appeared reasonably easy to get the go ahead on the adaptation but that there was a long delay in getting the work done.
105. Smaller design issues were mentioned by both housing association and local authority wardens. For example the height of kitchen cupboards, or the placement of opening windows over kitchen worktops, or small steps into bungalows. A number of wardens said that it was obvious that the people who had designed the schemes hadn't been old, and hadn't been going to live in them. This type of comment echoes national debate – with best practice to involve tenants from the start in any redesign or refurbishment work.
106. The following comments highlight other problems that some of the wardens had with their schemes. The warden who made the last set of comments below was 'disgusted' with the conditions and the environment that she and her tenants were living in.
107. All the wardens recognised that the quality of the building, accommodation and environment was central to the quality of life experienced by tenants. For a number of reasons, some of the wardens felt that the schemes did not provide such a quality environment. In general, the age of the building was the largest factor in the standard and appropriateness of the accommodation provided. Given that the housing association schemes tended to be younger, the association managers appeared to have fewer problems. However some of the housing association wardens in older schemes had problems and were waiting for improvements to be made. Local authority wardens were keen to see improvements, but were much less certain that they would be made.

'Privacy is important to these people. When you go into the bathroom the fan comes on – the walls are paper thin.' (LA Scheme, Glanford area)

'Popularity depends on location and the view. Some of the units are hard to let because the bungalows have no outlook.' (LA Scheme, Scunthorpe)

'Doing refurbishment when the flats are empty causes resentment to the existing tenants. New tenants get the best flats.' (LA Scheme, Scunthorpe)

'Maintenance work is terrible ... the place is falling apart. I have one broken down washing machine between 19 people. The communal facilities are poor and the bungalows are far too small with no storage facilities, with steps up. Council 'gardening' is totally unsympathetic so there is nowhere to sit out and no privacy.' (LA warden, Glanford area)

Role of the Warden

108. The section on housing management shows that there was often a difference in the responsibilities between housing association and local authority wardens. This section focuses more on the everyday role that wardens play in contact with tenants and their families.
109. The first issue that came across clearly was that there were two types of warden. The first type were those who were clear about their role within the organisation and the scheme – they knew what they would and would not be able to do for their tenants, and were generally able to stick to that. These wardens all worked for housing associations. It is potentially the case that these wardens would be more professional in how they viewed their job, and this was helped by them having a distinct management role on the scheme.
110. A second (much larger) group were less able or willing to make a clear distinction between when they were working and not working. The second group tended to see being a warden as a way of life rather than a job. The majority (but certainly not all) were happy with this arrangement, although many remarked that they often felt trapped in the role. They felt that their employers got more from them than they paid them for. Some comments on the next page illustrate the point.
111. The last comment sums up the nature of the wardens job very well. As the resident wardens were almost always on site, they could reach tenants quickly and it would be unthinkable for them not to respond in an emergency. Over time, they appeared to integrate their own lives into that of the tenants and the scheme to a greater extent. A number suggested that this could cause problems as they neared retirement

age. While a majority accepted that being a warden was not a normal job, they were unhappy that the other members of the housing department, tenants, tenants families, and health and social care providers were not able or willing to recognise them.

'You do lots of things you don't get paid for. Hours are cut back but the job is just the same.' (HA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Attitude is vital ... good wardens do the little extras.' (HA warden, Scunthorpe)

'You wouldn't be a warden if you didn't care for people.' (LA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Level of service depends on the personality of the warden.' (HA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Wardens do a lot that we don't get paid for and that the Council doesn't recognise. If we didn't do it the residents would suffer. There's no way to get that back that has any impact.' (LA warden, Glanford area)

'Need to be clear about the role and what you will and will not do. But as a last resort you can't not help.' (LA warden, Glanford area)

112. In addition to providing emergency support on one off occasions, many of the wardens hinted at becoming a last resort provider of support to some tenants on a more permanent and ongoing basis. Many wardens spoke of cases where for a range of reasons the mix of family, statutory and private care was insufficient and they themselves were called on repeatedly to help tenants cope with their basic needs. Thus the particular problems with tenants who had alcohol related problems or dementia problems, as difficulties for these tenants often manifested themselves at night when the other support services had 'gone home'. However cases like these were not common.
113. The other notable thing was that every warden interpreted their role in a slightly different way. None of them told the interviewer what their organisation said their role was. Some of the local authority wardens were more proactive than others, while some preferred to back away and let families take on more responsibility. Some said that they could not advise as they were not qualified and had to be careful to avoid it. Some saw their role as a go-between between the tenants and the agencies that may be able to help them. A fourth said that her role was to see that residents were safe and link them into other services, but that it was rare for tenants to ask her for help. The housing association wardens gave very similar responses. One said that she tried to figure out how best to have an influence in each case, while another said that the role was to plant ideas for the tenants to take up. Some of the

wardens said that they had to hold themselves back from wanting to do too much and interfere with the tenant and family.

114. Some of the local authority wardens who had been in post for a long time said that their role had changed over time. A number of the older wardens said that originally they had been a 'good neighbour' but now had to take on far more liaison work and more direct caring, as the levels of dependency had risen. In the original schemes tenants had had to pass a fitness test to get in – which was very different from the current situation. However the interviewer got the strong impression that some of them individually and as a group were confused over their role and place within the social care system.
115. Some of the wardens recognised that other staff groups didn't really know what the warden did. Research to come will show to what extent this is the case. If this is the case then it is perhaps not too surprising that other staff are unsure what a warden can do when the wardens interpreted their own role in so many different ways. Perhaps this lack of knowledge explains the reported communication difficulties.
116. All wardens felt that they knew the tenants very well indeed. They provided a pop-in or call service each day, so they felt they were well placed to provide support for their tenants. However a number of the wardens said that they could not spend sufficient time with the tenants (recognising that some tenants wanted as little to do with their warden as possible). Doing the arithmetic shows that spending as little as ten minutes with each tenant on a 30-unit scheme would take five hours. Clearly most of the wardens had their 'favourite' tenants as well as other tenants who they didn't like as much or who gave them more problems or who were very private people. These tenants they probably knew less about. Some of them said they felt that other staff and in particular care managers thought that they sat around all day. It would be interesting to know whether wardens have discussed their role between themselves or with other staff groups.
117. The following comment sums up the main frustration expressed by a majority of both housing association and local authority wardens – that they had too little contact with other health or social care professionals.

'We are well placed to act as eyes and ears. But it doesn't happen.' (LA warden, Scunthorpe)

Support from Central Office

118. Overall, the wardens accepted that theirs was a challenging and potentially lonely and isolated role that also had a number of great benefits and satisfactions. This was the case for both housing association and local authority wardens. Most wardens said that they enjoyed the job. Many were able to relate stories of social events on

the scheme that had been very enjoyable, or about occasions when they felt they had really made a difference to tenants. It was clear that over time most wardens grew emotionally attached to 'their' tenants. All the wardens said that they thought sheltered housing as a form of provision had a strong future.

119. As members of staff working alone (for the most part) in a potentially isolating role, they relied on support from the rest of their organisations. A number mentioned that they lived in a goldfish bowl atmosphere, and that the job meant them listening to problems and complaints for a large proportion of their time. As much as anything they needed somebody to talk to who understood what wardens experienced. For many, their husband/wife/partner played this role (and in some cases the partner also ended up providing services to the tenants).
120. Housing association wardens were mainly very positive about the level of support provided by their associations. A number of the wardens said that they felt their association got a lot from them on top of their contracted hours / job tasks. However they were all clear that if they had a major problem, their organisation would be quick to provide assistance and support. Just one of the newer wardens said that she felt isolated from the rest of her organisation, and felt that she had been 'forgotten about' when she first took on her job. Housing association wardens were also more likely to mention that they were well trained. A couple of the housing association wardens were in effect the entire face of their association in the area, because they didn't have a local office or any general stock. Because these wardens managed the allocation and letting to the tenants, they did not see this as a problem. In these organisations, the network of area or regional managers provided strong back-up and support.
121. Many of the local authority wardens were also positive about the level of support they had received, and agreed that they would be able to get any support that they needed from North Lincolnshire Council's Welfare Services section. However the picture was much more patchy and variable. Some of the local authority wardens had previously worked for the former Borough Councils and had therefore experienced a change within their employer organisation. As we have seen, local authority wardens also expressed the view that they had a much poorer housing management service from the Council - which made their job more difficult as they dealt with the frustration that this caused to the tenants.
122. About half of the local authority wardens felt they received sufficient contact and communication from Welfare Services. Some felt that the level of support was very good – with, for example, staff from the central office 'always visiting'. The other half said that they felt isolated from the rest of the organisation. This seemed to be a particular problem for wardens in Glanford (the area with the largest number of schemes). None of the wardens in Scunthorpe felt that this was a problem, and just one of the three wardens in the Isle of Axholme said that communications with the centre were poor. Some of the wardens

didn't feel the need of any support anyway, and were happy to get on with the job.

123. However the Glanford wardens who were unhappy with their contact with the centre were very unhappy. Two wardens said that North Lincolnshire Council as a whole was an impersonal organisation. Another said that she felt she was left to sort out all the problems on her own, and that she didn't feel a part of the organisation at all. Another said that she had been put into the job and left. Most worrying, two wardens expressed no confidence at all that they would get help from the centre if they were to need it.
124. Training was another point of difficulty for some local authority wardens. One said that the job needed a lot of proactive chasing round on behalf of tenants. Training or information on who did what within the local health, housing and social care systems was therefore vital. A second said that you had to just learn on the job. Two others said that they felt they needed training with issues such as dealing with nasty tenants or dealing with bereavement.
125. Overall, the research uncovered a startling split between wardens in Scunthorpe who were generally relaxed about their place within the housing department, and those in Glanford who felt that they had become very isolated. It is difficult to assess the reasons for this split on the basis of the interviews alone. Welfare services hold regular meetings with the wardens, but there were mixed views over how useful these meetings were. A number of the wardens suggested some simple ways around the problems they were experiencing. For example they mentioned making management meetings more relevant, and providing much more up to date information on how and where to access services.

Social Services and Health Services

126. All the wardens were asked whether they felt that there were any gaps in social or health care services in their area. A large majority were unable or unwilling to say that they or their tenants had experienced any consistent problems in accessing services. On the contrary, most of the wardens' initial reaction to this questioning was that the mix of local health and care services seemed to be good and/or improving. Social services input in particular was felt to be relatively easy to access.
127. However after prompting from the interviewer, some wardens did start to suggest that there were some support services which were more difficult to access than others, and that some issues did cause problems for some tenants. However only one issue cropped up more than twice. Therefore I will simply list the views that were expressed.
128. The only theme that came through was the difficulty of accessing help with bathing. We have already seen that wardens feel many tenants have problems bathing due to the design of bathrooms. Five of the local authority wardens said that assisted bathing was a significant gap

in services – these wardens were based in Brigg, Barton, Scunthorpe and the Isle of Axholme.

129. Other issues that were mentioned in relation to health and social care services are set out below. In addition to those below, the most interesting comments relate to the way that services are assessed and managed. Two of the wardens suggested that social services did not keep a sufficient eye on people who received services. This was not only because the tenants' needs increased – in some cases these wardens felt that people who no longer needed a home care service because a crisis had been overcome were still receiving the service. When other people couldn't get any help this was seen as a waste. This was not a criticism of the formal system of reviewing cases, but rather a comment that there did not appear to be any informal way for care workers to report back that a tenants' circumstances had changed.

'Befriending services are vital. There are many lonely people in the area.' (HA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Getting health assessments is difficult, especially CPNs. You need to chase.' (HA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Some people can't get any help at all while others are better at playing the system. Full care packages are a big problem ... a big gap.' (LA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Staff just don't have enough time.' (LA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Cleaning services were OK but many are now not paying for it.' (LA warden, Scunthorpe)

130. The other interesting comments related to the quality of agency staff. There was a total mix of view over agency staff. Two wardens who mentioned it said that the agency staff were just as good as social services staff had been. Three others said that they were not as good – with two warden saying this was because they were younger, poorly trained and unsympathetic with the clients because they couldn't relate to them.
131. One warden in a larger scheme in Scunthorpe suggested that a pool of carers based at the scheme would be a far more flexible, efficient and effective way to provide care. In her view the assessment process meant that not all those who needed care had care, and some people who had care didn't need it all the time. Therefore a pool of carers in the mornings and evenings would be able to match care with the need for care more easily. In some ways this is moving towards the care

that might be available in an extra care scheme – which one of the housing association wardens suggested was a gap in local service.

Contact with Social Care and Health Colleagues.

132. This last section describes how wardens viewed their contact with other social care and health care staff. We have already seen that they all felt they were well placed to know the tenants, and that they could spot when a tenant needed some help or intervention. On average the local authority wardens said that they spent about 5 minutes with each tenant each day. Practice among the housing association wardens was more variable – some said they called the tenants on the intercom system rather than visited. Some tenants did not want the warden to visit every day and so they had developed simple systems to ensure that the warden knew they were OK as she did her round. However in general the wardens were confident that they would be able to provide useful help for care managers, district nurses and G.P.s.
133. Most had had dealings with social workers/ care managers. Their impressions were very mixed. Some wardens always talked to the care manager when she/he was visiting a client on the scheme. The majority, however, said that care managers did not communicate with them at all. All but 2 of the wardens felt that some communication with the care manager would be appropriate – if only as a matter of courtesy to let them know that a visit had been made. A number said that they needed to know what was happening.
134. The majority said that social work staff did not involve them at all in assessments. While most accepted and could understand why this was the case, they still felt that their input would have been useful. A number of the wardens (from both the local authority and housing association sectors) said that they felt care managers didn't understand what wardens did, and lacked respect for them. Others could not understand why the care managers did not communicate with them, but said it was not due to a lack of respect. Most of the wardens thought it very odd that a care manager, with too little time to spend with a client, would not seek out the warden to see whether they had any useful information to help them form a view. In a number of cases, wardens said that care managers got it wrong because they didn't spend enough time with the client and had not bothered to speak to the warden. Many told of older people in desperate need of help (in the warden's view) who told care managers that they were OK, and so received no service. In many of these cases, the warden had to continue to provide support to help these tenants cope.
135. A further issue already mentioned elsewhere is that a small number of the wardens felt care managers did not visit often enough or check on whether the care package was sufficient and appropriate. Most wardens said that care workers were more likely to speak to them. However they were not confident that any system for care workers to report that a client's needs had changed worked well.

136. Fewer of the wardens had had much contact with community health staff. One housing association warden said that district nurses or community psychiatric nurses were much more likely than care managers to rely on the warden as a contact. However this view was not expressed often, with most saying they had little contact with the health staff who did visit.
137. Care managers and health staff are understandably concerned about issues of client confidentiality. It is ironic to note that in very many cases, the client immediately tells the warden about the confidential discussion between them and their care manager.
138. The following comments have been chosen to illustrate the range of views expressed by the wardens about health and social care staff.

'Communications with care managers OK.' (LA warden, Glanford area)

'Most care workers will communicate.' (LA warden, Glanford area)

'Social Services only spend 15 minutes to make a decision. Most assessment is guesswork. I (scheme manager) know more about the tenant. But I can't overstep the mark.' (HA warden, Scunthorpe)

'There is little communication from care workers and none from care managers. The warden needs to know what 's happening.' (LA warden, Glanford area)

'There's no way to be involved in deciding the future of individual tenants. You need to realise there comes a point when more support is required. Assessments can be incorrect at times.' (LA warden, Scunthorpe)

'Don't assess often enough. People can change rapidly. Overall the system doesn't appear to work well from the outside.' (LA warden, Isle of Axholme)

Further Questions.

139. In general the wardens who work in North Lincolnshire have provided a very positive view about sheltered housing as a form of provision. They feel that the sector can continue to provide a community based form of provision that offers older people security and independence. However clearly there are some problems within the sector, and in

terms of how sheltered housing fits within the range of social and health care services that support older people.

140. The report has raised a number of further questions to be considered. The need to answer some of these questions is increased by a range of central government inspired agendas such as best value and the drive to encourage joint working, and by more local issues such as high void rates or the need to find ways to support older people within rural communities.

- Do landlord organisations know what their tenants think about the quality of housing management services, grounds maintenance, social and health care services? Do tenants have any suggestions for improvement?
- Do landlords know what their tenants think about the condition and quality of the buildings that they live in? Do tenants have any suggestions for improvements?
- Do landlords know what tenants think about sheltered housing, and about the support they get from their warden?
- Do social and health care providers know what users think about the quality and quantity of their provision?
- Can landlords clarify the role of their wardens in relation to tenants? Is there scope to devolve greater responsibility for everyday services in and around sheltered schemes to the warden and tenants? Is there a need for wardens to have a more formal caring role?
- Do other health and social care staff understand and respect the role of the warden? Can health and social care staff and providers benefit from information that wardens can give them?
- Can problems of poor communications between wardens and other health and social care staff, or between wardens and other housing staff, be left to be resolved on the basis of personal contact at a local level?
- Do housing, health and social care providers have a clear view of how sheltered housing fits within the future span of community care services?
- Are there other uses for sheltered schemes? Could local care teams be based in some schemes to provide more flexible care for tenants and other people in the surrounding area? Could wardens be supported more to ensure that the communal facilities on the schemes become a community resource as well as an improved tenant resource?