

## Housing for older people



Modern housing schemes for older people offer self contained accommodation, generally restricted to people aged 55 or over. Most residents lead full and active lives but welcome the additional security offered by this type of housing. Several landlords advertise this type of housing through the Bedfordshire Homefinder website.

### **Is an independent living scheme right for me?**

People choose independent living schemes (sometimes referred to as “sheltered” schemes) for many different reasons. Some value the peace of mind and reassurance of a safe environment with support services available if they need them. Others welcome the friendships that close neighbours can offer, and the opportunities to get involved in a range of activities with people of a similar age.

Some older people find it expensive and difficult to maintain a family home and choose to move to a smaller more manageable home. And as people get older, mobility needs can change – independent living schemes can offer step-free access and adaptations such as walk-in showers.

## **What types of accommodation are available for older people?**

Independent living schemes can include:

- Flats with a visiting independent living support service

- Extra care schemes – for people who need on site support service

- Groups of bungalows in the wider community, again where visiting support can be provided if needed.

Blocks of flats offer secure homes, generally with door entry systems. Alarm systems, such as Telecare or Life 24, are also available guaranteeing peace of mind for residents and their families. Most schemes also include a communal laundry, guest rooms for friends or family for overnight visiting, social areas and communal gardens. There are often social and group activities which residents can get involved in if they wish to.

## **I'm 60 years young and I don't feel I need support!**

Support services are flexible and support services are tailored to the needs of each resident, so you won't have to accept support you don't need or want! Having said that, due to the nature of the schemes there is generally an additional support charge included in the rent which you would be liable for even if you didn't require the support on offer. But if your circumstances change, staff are on hand to help whether it's filling in a benefit claim form or liaising with social services to get you extra help while you recover from an illness or injury.

## **Can I bring my pet if I move to independent living?**

Each scheme differs but dogs and cats are not usually allowed in flats (although there may be exceptions for guide dogs or hearing dogs). You should speak to the landlord of the scheme you are interested in to find out about their pet policy.

## **I'm downsizing - can I keep my furniture?**

All properties are offered unfurnished so you will need to provide your own furniture, but if you are moving from a three-bedroom family home to a one-bed flat you will probably need to give some of your furniture to family, friends or charity! Ask your new landlord for advice if you can offer unwanted furniture to another household who may be starting out with very little.

## How much will it cost?

Charges will vary according to the scheme and the landlord but in general the charges are made up of the following elements:

- ◆ **Rent:** This is the charge for the property itself. If you are receiving housing benefit the rent element, in full or part depending on your other income, will be payable.
- ◆ **Service charge:** This charge is for the maintenance of the property and services in the communal areas, such as cleaning, lift maintenance and garden maintenance. This charge is also eligible for housing benefit if you are receiving it.
- ◆ **Support charge:** this charge covers the emergency alarm service and visits from independent living staff. You will probably have to pay the basic support charge even if you feel you don't need the support services at present. This charge is not eligible for housing benefit but will have to be met from your other income, eg. wages or pension.
- ◆ **Heating and hot water:** Some schemes have communal heating and hot water. The cost is divided between the number of flats in the scheme and charged to each resident. This element is not eligible for housing benefit. In schemes which don't have communal heating/hot water you will have to choose an energy supplier and pay your bills directly to them.

## Choosing a scheme

There are a few things to consider when choosing a scheme. Is it far away from your family and friends? Will they be able to visit you easily? If you like to do your own shopping and cooking, are there local shops you can get to easily? Or public transport services you could use to go further afield. If you need on-site services, what is on offer? Some schemes can provide visiting services like hairdressing or chiropody. If possible, arrange to visit a scheme and talk to the staff about the services provided before you bid for any vacant homes.

## How do I apply for this type of housing?

You will normally have to apply to the local authority to join the housing register. Visit [www. CBC](http://www.CBC) or [www. LBC](http://www. LBC) for information on how to apply. If you are eligible and qualify for rehousing you will be notified of your priority on the housing register and how to bid for properties advertised on Bedfordshire Homefinder. (See leaflet [How To Bid](#)) If you have difficulty with bidding you can ask a family member or friend to bid for you, or ask us to place bids for you automatically in the areas you are interested in.

If you need extra care because you are frail or have additional care needs you will also need to have an assessment by your local authority Social Services team to make sure the scheme is suitable for your needs.

For more information about Bedfordshire Homefinder, applying for housing and the bidding process go to the [Useful information](#) tab and select the Choice-based lettings page.



[www.bedfordshirehomefinder.co.uk](http://www.bedfordshirehomefinder.co.uk)