

Committee: Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 25th June 2018

Wards: All

Subject: Home Share Scheme task group – Update on the implementation of the recommendations

Lead officer: John Morgan, Assistant Director Adult Social Care, Community & Housing

Lead member: Tobin Byers, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health.

Contact officer: Richard Ellis, Head of Community & Housing Strategy & Partnerships

Recommendations:

- A. That the panel discuss and comment on the progress on choosing a Home Share partner
 - B. That the panel discuss and comment on the plan for the implementation of the scheme
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The report sets out the actions taken and further plans in response to the decision of Cabinet in February 2018 to support a Home Share scheme in Merton.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. In June 2017 the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed to undertake a scrutiny review of Home Share schemes.
- 2.2. Home Share is a reciprocal arrangement between householders, usually but not exclusively older people, with a spare room, who also have low level support needs, and a sharer who commits to undertaken a certain level of support in return for a licence to occupy the spare room.
- 2.3. Typically, the sharer is younger person, student or public service worker who needs accommodation and is able to provide additional support. It is important to note that the sharer is expected to provide companionship and domestic support, not personal care. As such, these schemes are not regulated by the Care Quality Commission.
- 2.4. The purpose of the task group was to consider if a scheme of this nature would be beneficial for the residents of Merton. The Panel's recommendations to proceed with a scheme were presented to and accepted by Cabinet at its meeting on 19 February 2018.
- 2.5. Since that decision, officers have undertaken further research and market testing to establish the options for choosing a referral partner. It is important

in choosing a partner to under due diligence, with particular emphasis on their approach to safeguarding.

- 2.6. That research indicated that there are only two schemes that purport to operate in Merton, but only one that currently has home share clients in Merton. As that scheme also operates from the borough, officers decided that it was appropriate to take forward discussion with that provider, Share & Care, who are based in Thornton Road, Wimbledon.
- 2.7. Discussions with Share & Care have established that they are a potential suitable partner. They currently have 4 home share arrangements in Merton. The key elements of their offer include:
 - 2.7.1 That they are well established in the field;
 - 2.7.2 They understand Merton, as a place and a community;
 - 2.7.3 They have appropriate safeguards and policies in place;
 - 2.7.4 Although no personal care is provided, sharers are subject to similar checks as a care worker;
 - 2.7.5 They are able to provide face-to-face support in Merton to householders and sharers;
 - 2.7.6 They are clear on the legal, financial and regulatory issues.
- 2.8. Share & Care charge both the householder and the sharer £150 per month. The sharer occupies under licence and makes no payment to the householder. Instead, they commit to providing 15 hours per week in support, of which 10 hours should be practical support and the balance is generally companionship.
- 2.9. It is officers' view that householders must have the capacity to understand what they are taking on. This does not preclude householders or sharers with dementia or a learning disability, but a Mental Capacity Act assessment in relation to this particular decision may be necessary.
- 2.10. Officers also believe that Home Share may not be suitable for a householder who has no other form of regular contract with family or friends, as this would increase their level of dependency on a sharer. This could increase their vulnerability to the sharer, but also place the sharer under unfair pressure to maintain the relationship when their need to share has ended.
- 2.11. Householders who enter into a share will need to be aware of all of the implications of sharing, including financial. These include the monthly costs of the scheme and the loss of single persons Council Tax discount.
- 2.12. LBM would not be making payment to Share & Care, but would be undertaking to promote the scheme with partner organisations and encourage our own staff to make referrals where appropriate. This would not preclude other agencies from operating in Merton, but we would be making and encouraging referrals to just one agency.

3 NEXT STEPS

- 3.1. Officers will take the following next steps:

- 3.1.1 Verify the safeguarding and other policies;
- 3.1.2 Verify that the stated checks on sharers are carried out;
- 3.1.3 Interview a sample of Merton based householders and their sharers to establish their experience of Share & Care as a provider.
- 3.2. If those checks are satisfactory, we will then:
 - 3.2.1 Develop material for staff and partners setting out when Home Share might be a suitable option and the referral method;
 - 3.2.2 Work with Share & Care to promote the scheme through written materials and ‘Lunch & Learn’ sessions for staff and partners.
 - 3.2.3 Monitor the take up and success of any referrals made over the first year;
 - 3.2.4 Review the scheme at six months and one year.
- 3.3. We aim to complete the checks by the end of June, with the aim of starting promotion in September 2018.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 4.1. Do Nothing – home share providers are able to promote their service and receive referrals without the council’s direct involvement. However, experience shows that take up is low and householder and potential sharers may be missing out on an opportunity as a result.
- 4.2. Promote all potential home share providers – this would provide choice, but would increase the workload for the council in checking and monitoring referrals. It may also reduce the effectiveness of referrals as our staff and partners would not have the same knowledge and contact with the agencies.
- 4.3. Choose and refer to one verified agency – this is supported by the relatively low level of business. It would allow us to monitor the scheme more closely and to ensure that our staff and partners who might make referrals have the opportunity to meet with the agency concerned.

5 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 5.1. This is a voluntary scheme that is in addition to services the council offers. The Panel undertook significant research in coming to its recommendations. Further consultation is therefore not felt necessary.

6 TIMETABLE

- 6.1. Complete verification by 30 June 2018
- 6.2. Launch partnership by early September 2018.

7 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. The council would not be making payment to Share & Care. As sharers do not provide personal care, it is unlikely that the householder payment would be part of a service users personal budget other than in exceptional circumstances and then it is likely to be part of a direct payment.

8 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. The council has a duty to promote wellbeing, and this scheme is part of the council meeting its duty.

- 8.2. The Authority will not be entering into a contract with Share & Care, the homeowners or the sharers. The Council's role would be limited to referrals and sign posting persons who appear to be eligible to join the Home Share scheme in Merton. In making referrals and promoting the Home Share scheme, the Council must consider its various legal duties to residents of the borough and be satisfied that the scheme would promote the wellbeing of those who participate in the scheme.

9 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Both the householders and the sharers enter into the arrangement voluntarily and have the right to terminate the arrangement with notice.
- 9.2. The scheme can be part of promoting inter-generational cohesion and inclusion as sharing is typically between an older householder and a younger sharer.

10 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. There are potential risks in home sharing, but with appropriate safeguards in place these are no greater than in general day to day life. A householder with a sharer may actually be at reduced risk of crime compared to an isolated householder.

11 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. There is a reputational risk to the council if a referral results in a home share that goes wrong. This is mitigated by the checks being undertaken before we commence any referrals.

12 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- none

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 13.1. Cabinet paper 19 February and Panel report attached as an appendix to that report.