

Continuing the Step Down Scheme (Housing, Maggie Ward)

Synopsis of report:

In March 2021 Housing Committee approved the use of two Independent Retirement Living (IRL) flats for participation in a pilot “Step Down” scheme to support the NHS in a partnership with Spelthorne, Woking and Elmbridge Councils.

The scheme is to facilitate discharge from hospital for medically fit patients who cannot immediately return home, providing a 6-week placement with a care package to enable their own accommodation to be made ready.

Following a successful pilot, the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) approved funding for a further year to extend the scheme from April 2022.

The scheme has been successful in moving patients out of hospital beds into interim solutions whilst their housing needs can be addressed. As a result, the ICP has requested the pilot is confirmed as an ongoing fully funded partnership scheme.

The report requests approval for the continued use of two IRL flats for “Step Down” or “Step Up” where a patient needs accommodation with support either before or after a hospital admission.

Recommendation(s) that:

- i) Members approve the continued use of 2 IRL flats for Step Down Accommodation; and**
- ii) the Use of IRL properties for Step Down is reviewed in 3 years**

1. Context and background of report

- 1.1** In March 2021 Housing Committee approved participation in a pilot scheme to be funded by the ICP to provide accommodation either with care on site or where a short term agency package could be provided through Adult Social Care. These are called “step down” beds as they are an interim between hospital care and full discharge. This is furnished accommodation for up to six weeks whilst the issues with their own home are addressed. The pilot scheme has seven properties, two each from Woking, Spelthorne (A2 Dominion) and Runnymede and one at Whitely Village in Elmbridge.
- 1.2** Following a successful pilot, the scheme was approved for a further year from April 2022. The integrated care partnership has now requested that the scheme is continued as it has proven beneficial in providing accommodation for patients who no longer need medical care but have no suitable home to be discharged to.

- 1.3 A Coordinator is funded to manage the scheme, based at Spelthorne they work with the Hospital Discharge teams and manage the moves in and out of Step Down, arranging care packages and meals at home where required.

2. **Report**

- 2.1 The Integrated Care Partnership has approved funding for the scheme to continue and the Boroughs are requested to confirm that the existing properties will remain within the scheme. Residents of Runnymede benefit from the scheme although they can be allocated step down within any of the boroughs depending on which type of property is suitable.

- 2.2 There are no applicants within a priority band waiting for IRL in Chertsey where there are two schemes, Floral House and Beomonds, providing a total of 93 flats. The utilisation of two properties for Step Down does not have a significant impact for people on the Housing Register waiting for IRL where access is relatively quick. If this situation changes the use of these properties will be reviewed.

3. **Policy framework implications**

- 3.1 Extending the 'Step Down' service supports the Corporate Health and Wellbeing Strategy which promotes the work Runnymede Borough Council is doing to support and facilitate residents being appropriately discharged from hospital.

4. **Resource implications**

- 4.1 All costs for the property are covered by the scheme.

5. **Legal implications**

- 5.1 Interim lettings to the properties at Floral House are made in accordance with Runnymede's Housing Allocations Policy. Exceptions can be made to the prioritisation criteria and the use of a 'direct let' is available under section 9.6 of the policy (sections b and i are most relevant in this situation).

"The Council may not advertise all properties, and may reserve some properties / nominations for direct letting in the following circumstances:

- a) Assisted Choice for Homeless Households Scheme (see section 13)
- b) Where the property has specific adaptations
- c) To allow the landlord to make the best use of their housing stock
- d) For community safety reasons
- e) For management moves (see paragraph 6.10.10)
- f) For reasons of public protection
- g) Where the move will facilitate a chain of lets releasing another property which the Council has a particular need of (usually involving under occupiers)
- h) Where the property is deemed to be hard to let
- i) Any other reason as authorised by the Service Manager or the Strategic Housing Manager."

Runnymede Borough Council's Housing Allocations Policy Section 9.6 Exceptions to advertising properties

6. **Equality implications**

6.1 Although this scheme takes two properties out of use as Independent Retirement living flats, these properties are not currently in high demand. They would be accessed by older people and therefore this group with a protected characteristic are disproportionately impacted by the scheme. However, this is the largest IRL scheme with 75 flats and the properties are in the outer blocks which are less popular with people seeking the security of the scheme. There is a regular turnover of properties so this would not have a significant impact on waiting list times. Most of the patients accessing the scheme are elderly and vulnerable and therefore the benefit of the scheme to Runnymede residents outweighs the potential small increase in waiting time for an individual.

7. Environmental/Sustainability/Biodiversity implications

7.1 None

8. Timetable for Implementation

8.1 The scheme is in operation this financial year and approval will mean that the scheme continues from April 2023.

8.2 It is recommended that the scheme is reviewed in three years or earlier if demand for IRL increases or the ICP seeks to change the terms of the agreement.

(To resolve)

Background papers

Reports to Housing Committee, March 2021 and March 2022