

ELDERLY PERSONS ACCOMODATION WORKING GROUP – SOCIAL INCLUSION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Visit to Liverpool March 2004 – Report by Councillor Maureen McGarvie

Councillor McGarvie and Fauzia Saeed met with Adrian Quinn, Older Persons Services Co-ordinator, from South Liverpool Housing Association. We were very impressed by the way in which the exchange of the housing stock from the local council has resulted in a great turnaround for the elderly tenants.

Introduction

In 1999 SLH took over 4000 homes in Speke and Garsten from Liverpool City Council. Since then they have set about transforming one of the Uks most deprived areas through major investment, pioneering partnerships and a community development agenda that drives everything they do. They have delivered major investment in homes and people. In addition they have refurbished almost all of the housing stock, created scores of local jobs and funded a wide range of community projects. They are rising to the challenge by developing two separate companies, SLH and SLR, specialising in housing and regeneration respectively. They want to grow and improve to give local residents more choice and improved services.

Housing improving our neighbourhoods

Providing quality homes in neighbourhoods where people want to live is very important. £100 million major improvements programme was launched when the housing associations took over in 1999. Its progress has been phenomenal. They are set to complete all tasks within the budget and a whole 12 months ahead of schedule. Tenants have been involved in every step.

They are also delivering first rate customer services with new offices and an award winning one-stop shop and a hugely popular caretaking team.

Innovation

As part of the future they are committed to finding new ways of involving tenants and improving the services to the local community ("capacity building").

A community newspaper with complete editorial independence was launched; this gives residents a chance to express their views. They have developed "Your TV". This project will connect all of these homes to broadband, which will give local residents access to a wide range of local on-line services, and community- developed content, alongside all free-to-air TV channels. Learning centres have been set up for residents to get used to the

technology and involve the community in developing a wide range of programmes.

Link between health and housing

Residents of Speke and Garsten experience poor health. A brief examination of the SLH group tenants profile, demonstrate how high the proportions of older people occupying SLH properties are, and it is an expanding category. The SLH customer satisfaction survey for 2003 revealed an annual increase of 6% in the 60+ groups to almost 38%. The 2003 customer satisfaction survey also highlighted the following health related factors with the SLH group tenant population. 17.5% tenants are permanently sick or disabled, 61% of households contain someone with moderate or severe health problems.

There is multiple deprivation particularly in Speke. The second most deprived ward in the country. 74% of the population are totally dependent on state benefits with a further 12% partially dependent.

Older persons services

With the assistance of neighbourhood renewal funding a health orientated project has been developed to deliver joined-up services that meet local priorities as well, as government objectives. This is part of a shared agenda across health, housing, social services, leisure and transport services. Drawing upon the housing expertise of the SLH group a range of practical services including "handy person", gardening, decorating and assisting with repairs and replacement of white goods, have been developed. They are intending to reduce the incidents of home-related accidents and enhance feeling of safety and security.

Conclusion

I was very impressed with SLH. They have a good understanding of tenants needs and expectations. The SLH have listened to tenants and work closely on all matters, which has produced results in terms of improved housing. They are even prepared to learn more by further consulting tenants. I'm sure Luton could learn a lot from the Liverpool approach to improved housing.

In the short time I was there it was good to see the redevelopment of old buildings, which have been converted into social housing. Of course many of the improvements were due to money being made available to tackle the problems, although it is clear that this type of investment can have some wider benefits to society.

Councillor Maureen McGarvie
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