

## Learning Snapshot: Sheltered Housing

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged 50+.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations relevant to tackling loneliness and social isolation within sheltered accommodation by working and engaging with older people living there.

You can use it as a summary of the full [learning report](#), and to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams.

<p><b>1. Why focus on Sheltered Housing?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sheltered housing refers to all housing managed by either housing associations or private providers. In this learning snapshot, it includes any accommodation with a warden, scheme manager or support staff and some shared facilities.</li> <li>Whilst many sheltered housing developments are thriving communities providing active social connections, it is understood that people in sheltered housing can be at risk of social isolation and loneliness where social connections have already weakened because of personal circumstances and/or the sheltered housing environment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. What are the challenges when engaging with people living in Sheltered Housing?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are both practical and psychological barriers that prevent people living in sheltered housing from connecting with activity programmes.</li> <li>Housing units can be home to a range of people with a variety of backgrounds, individual challenges, wants and needs.</li> <li>The point that someone enters sheltered housing often coincides with one or more “life transitions” such as the loss of a loved one or a physical or mental decline. This amplifies the risk of social isolation.</li> <li>There can be increased risks and anxieties connecting with people you live with.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. So what can we do with this learning?</b></p> <p>The tools and techniques used to engage people in sheltered housing are similar to those used elsewhere, but there is more opportunity and incentive to build connections in this “structured community”. There are also greater risks and anxieties, which require understanding and support.</p> <p><b>Test and learn from services in your area:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use food, special occasions, external links and taster sessions to engage people.</li> <li>Allocate time and staff resources to engage people in group activities and to properly develop an offer that reflects what people <i>want</i> to engage with.</li> <li>Gently challenge perceptions and entrenched ideas through positive relationships and community building.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. How can we overcome these challenges?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Co-design activities with people living and working in the sheltered housing unit.</li> <li>Recognise the significant role of the ‘warden’ and staff team in the success of activities, and factor this relationship building time into the project.</li> <li>Promote new connections by linking people to external groups and inviting these groups into the accommodation to use spaces such as communal gardens.</li> <li>Ageing Better found an effective way of engaging people living in sheltered housing in activities was a letter drop, followed by a personal door knock.</li> <li>Understand that activities should be person centred and delivered within the individual context of the housing service.</li> </ul>