

North Tyneside Council, North Tyneside Living and Northumbria University: Progressing from Reactive to Preventative modes of housing, health and adult social care delivery

Health and Life Sciences: KTP case study

North Tyneside Council has partnered Northumbria University in three Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTPs) since 2008, all of which have had a positive impact on the lives of sheltered housing residents in the area. The Knowledge Transfer Partnership is a UK-wide government programme helping businesses to improve their competitiveness and productivity through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills residing in UK Universities.

The most recent award winning KTP (UK Housing 2014 Awards - Innovation of the Year) was focussed on developing an innovative service jointly provided by housing, health and adult social care functions. The relationship continues, with a new post jointly funded and managed making a real contribution to the nationally important issue of care for our ageing population.

Through this KTP the Council's tenants have been actively involved in a new and innovative approach having a central role in helping identify new services and develop existing ones. To date the results have led to the development of nutritional support for healthy eating, direct access to specialist nurses and multidisciplinary teams, and development of dementia friendly environments.

By transforming sheltered housing services from being reactive to establishing a preventative and enabling mode of delivery, operating company North Tyneside Homes has helped enable tenants to age-in-place which reduces housing voids and improves rental incomes.

The cultural and transformative change in the Council workforce saw significant improvements in effective working practices with other services to promote tenants' wellbeing and support independent living. Tenants are delighted with the improved service and enhanced quality of their lives. Substantial cost savings have been attained.

Christine McMillan, Service Manager, North Tyneside Quality Homes says:

"What we have come to expect from sheltered housing in the UK is a reactive service, and what we are moving towards in North Tyneside is a service that is proactive and focuses on assisting older people to lead healthier and more active lives. We are consulting widely with our clients and putting their aspirations for living fulfilling later lives at the core of our service development,"

The KTP ran from 2012 to 2015. It involved Dr Joanne Rose, the KTP Associate, working directly with Council housing officers, with the 1,000+ older tenants in sheltered housing and with a variety of different public and voluntary agencies, such as the NHS and Age Concern. The approach used was based on the principles of involvement of older people in policy and service decision-making, developed from research conducted at Northumbria University by Professors Jan Reed and Glenda Cook in the early 2000s. Many of the principles identified by Reed and Cook such as grassroots involvement in key service planning decisions are now widely accepted in the care industry.