

Nine Key Questions and Answers

Sheltered and retirement housing is a huge resource. More older people (two thirds of a million) in the UK currently live in sheltered and retirement housing than in residential and nursing care put together. Sheltered and retirement housing was originally intended for fit, active older people. However, demographic trends and community care have led to an older and frail population living, or wishing to live, in sheltered and retirement housing. The service has therefore evolved in response to these changing needs and new models of extra care sheltered housing are being developed. Residents can live independent and fulfilled lives in specially designed accommodation that aims to offer a "home for life". This leaflet, one of a series of six*, has been produced by a consortium of sheltered and retirement housing providers.

Phone 01249 654 249 for:

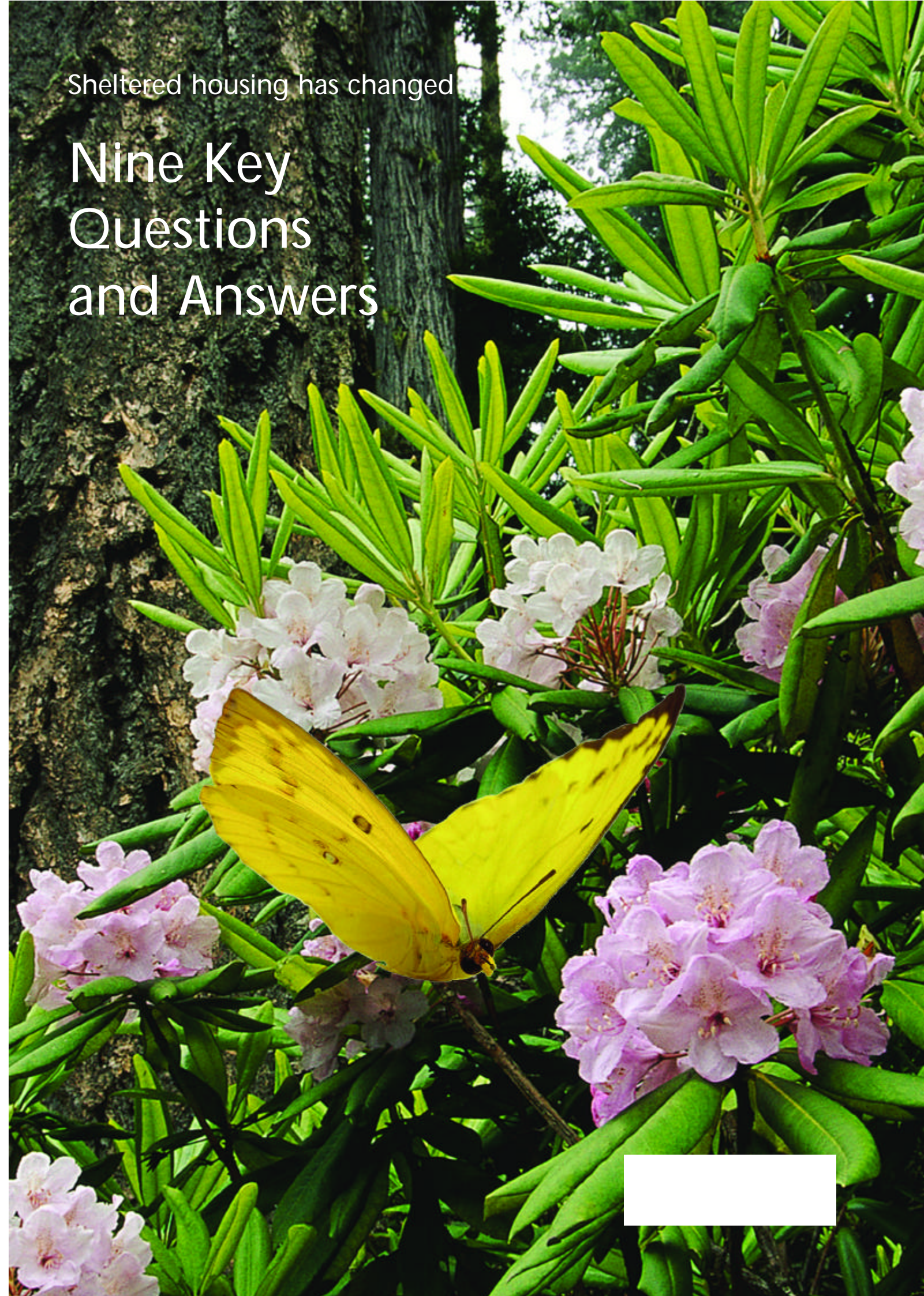
- more leaflets
- further information on this consortium or obtain information from www.shelteredhousing.org

* Six different leaflets are available for:

- Hospital and primary care staff
- Social services
- Sheltered and retirement housing providers
- General enquiries, older people, friends and relatives - 9 Key Questions and Answers about sheltered and retirement housing in different languages
- Domiciliary care - a good practice guide for sheltered and retirement housing staff
- Supporting People - a guide and checklist for sheltered housing staff.

Sheltered housing has changed

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Q1 What is sheltered housing?

It is specially designed accommodation, available for rent or for sale, mainly for older people. It is sometimes called retirement housing. Some sheltered schemes are called 'extra care sheltered housing'/'very sheltered housing'/'assisted living'. These provide care from a care team located on-site, as well as support.

Q2 What does it provide?

There are lots of variations between sheltered housing schemes.

They usually provide, however, many of the following features:

- Self-contained flats with their own bathrooms and fitted kitchens
- Communal facilities such as:
 - laundry
 - communal lounge for a variety of social activities
 - gardens
 - guest room
- Security and safety features
- A warden/scheme manager (sometimes resident in the scheme)
- 24-hour emergency assistance through connection of each flat to a call centre.

Many sheltered housing providers also aim to provide a 'home for life' – ask them.

Q3 What does the scheme manager do?

Again, this varies according to the nature of the scheme and the needs of the residents.

They usually:

- Help newcomers to settle in and explain how everything works
- Make regular contact with each resident
- Together with the resident, assess needs and agree a support plan to help residents maintain their independence
- In consultation with residents, liaise with families, statutory, voluntary and private agencies to ensure these needs are met
- Deal with emergencies
- Encourage social activities
- Report and monitor repairs and maintenance work

- Co-ordinate and give advice on services such as shopping, cleaning, cooking, personal and nursing care. Although they rarely directly provide such services, they can take on an advocacy and liaison role, to help residents access these services
- Provide assistance and support in maintaining residents' tenancies and directing residents to other services.

Q4 Who is eligible for sheltered housing?

- Different providers and landlords set different criteria but most state that you should be over 60. People living alone or in couples are eligible.
- Many older people can now move into and remain in sheltered housing, because the buildings are specially designed for the easy delivery of health, care and support services. Your particular requirements will usually be discussed with you before you move in to ensure that services are in place prior to your arrival.
- Most sheltered housing providers do not provide care but may be able to assist prospective residents to access it.

Q5 How much does it cost?

- If you rent, you will pay a weekly rent plus a service charge and a support charge.
- If you buy, you will pay a service charge and a support charge.
- The service charge in both rented and owner occupied schemes includes the costs of cleaning, gardening and the furnishing and maintenance of common/communal areas.
- You may be entitled to assistance with the rent from Housing Benefit or Income Support and you will be advised about this on application. You may also be able to receive help in paying the support charge from the local Supporting People team. The scheme manager will be able to advise you on this.

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Q6 What are the benefits of living in sheltered/retirement housing?

- Good quality housing
- A home for life wherever possible
- Your own front door
- Independence
- Peace of mind, with help on hand via scheme manager or central control in emergencies
- Security
- Support when needed
- Company when wanted
- Remaining part of a community
- Choice of landlord/provider.

Q7 What should I look for in a sheltered housing scheme?

Be clear about what you want and decide which of the following factors are important to you:

- Location – ease of access to shops, transport and surgeries
- Design – suitable for special needs (wheelchair, visual impairment etc)
- Communal facilities (are they what you want?)
- Size and layout of flat (does it meet your needs?)
- Atmosphere
- Support available when needed
- Scheme manager (are they welcoming, informative?)
- Cost
- Other residents (what do they say about living there?)
- Do the services and location meet your cultural, language and religious needs?

Q8 What support is available and what say will I have about the type of service?

- The level and nature of the support will vary according to your needs, the scheme and the local area, and you should speak to the scheme manager to find out exactly what support can be given.
- The landlord, support provider and local Supporting People team may each periodically contact residents to enquire about the quality of the service, value for money and how the service is delivered.

- You have a right to be consulted about the service you receive.

- Those who do not speak English should make sure there is language support available.

- For extra care schemes that provide at least one meal a day as part of the tenancy agreement, there should be support to make sure the food is culturally appropriate.

Q9 How do I find out more about sheltered/retirement housing? Approach your local council and local advice agencies, housing associations and private retirement housing providers and arrange to visit some schemes.

The following is a list of national advice agencies:

- Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) provides detailed information about 21,000 housing schemes for older people throughout the UK.
T 020 7820 1343
e-mail: enquiries@e-ac.demon.co.uk
website: www.HousingCare.org
- The Advice, Information and Mediation Service (AIMS) provides information, legal advice and a dispute resolution service for residents of sheltered housing.
T 0845 600 2001
email: aims@ace.org.uk
website: www.ageconcern.org.uk/aims
- The Age Concern Information Line provides a service to older people and their relatives and friends, and to carers and professionals. Contact the line on 0800 00 99 66 (a free call) to obtain up to five factsheets free.
- ERoSH, the national consortium for sheltered housing and producer of this leaflet: T 01249 654249
email: info@shelteredhousing.org
www.shelteredhousing.org

Also contact your local housing information office.