

Swindon Borough Council: Extra Care Sheltered Housing programme

Summary

Swindon Borough Council is increasingly using geographical information (GI) in the commissioning and delivery of health and social care services. This is enabling the council to develop effective, locality-based joint interventions and strategies.

The council and local primary care trust (PCT) worked in partnership to plan the Extra Care Sheltered Housing programme using GI resources.

Key learnings

- Using the power of GI can link need to service delivery.
- Working across council departments to share information and knowledge can greatly enhance project outcomes.
- Using maps of the local area can effectively communicate complex information and increase 'buy-in' for project proposals.

Background to the authority

Swindon is a busy borough benefiting from its location in the M4's 'golden corridor'. It has been identified by central government as a national growth area. It is a unitary council and also holds beacon status in 2007/08.

The population is 180,051, according to the 2001 Census. Fourteen per cent – 24,835 – were aged 65 years and above at this time, compared with the national average of 16 per cent.

Who was involved?

The project included social care professionals working with the Geographical Information (GI) team at the borough. There was also involvement from the local PCT.

The problems and how we tackled them

The council undertook a review of the Extra Care Sheltered Housing programme. This nationwide programme provides housing with care for older people who require extra help at home.

New proposals for sites for extra care centres were proposed and then investigated by the council's GI department. These investigations demonstrated that initial proposals were inconsistent with the geographical spread of need within Swindon.

Working with simple maps and geographical information allowed complex information to be accurately and quickly presented to senior managers. This demonstrated that a current site for extra care facilities needed to be reviewed.

Outcomes and impact

The major outcome of this project review was the discovery that a key site had been located in a disadvantageous position. This unit was therefore relocated to better serve identified need within the area. Council services are now sited in an appropriate location to serve the local population.

The second outcome was that 'buy-in' from senior decision makers was greatly aided by the use of maps in the decision process. The complex information of the local area presented on maps quickly and simply demonstrated the problem. It allowed a potentially contentious decision-making process to be quickly resolved.

What could have been done better?

Recognising the value of geographical analysis earlier on in the project could have produced initial recommendations that were more accurate and better presented.

Next steps

The value of geographical analysis to health and social care planning has clearly been demonstrated for the council. The analysis and relationships between the departments are now being applied to other projects. These include coordination of homecare services to create more efficient rounds for the care staff.

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