

Senior flat sharing

Published On: 20 August 2014

Organisation: Caen City Council

Country: France

Level of government: Local government

Sector: Housing and community amenities, Social protection

Type: Public Service

Launched in: 2011

Overall development time: 4 years

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Description

Two facts were noted in one of the city districts in Caen called Chemin Vert: First, the isolation of old people and the occupation of large flats by only one elderly person. Secondly, the Housing Association had large flats (3/4 bedrooms) available but the cost of rent was too high and they were proving difficult to rent. The innovative idea was to resolve these two difficulties by providing an intermediary housing offer (i.e. a solution between living alone and moving to a home for the elderly) which was financially accessible and enabled people to grow old together within the district in which they had always lived. The idea is to encourage two to four elderly people to flat/house share in the centre of the district, close to shops and services.

Why the innovation was developed

- Provide an additional, accessible form of housing for the elderly.
 - Help combat their loneliness.
 - Make efficient use of social housing facilities.
 - Ensure a better quality of life during their final years.
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Objectives

Improve effectiveness, Improve efficiency, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction

- To put an end to the solitude of the elderly.
 - To encourage the renting of larger flats.
 - To diversify the housing offer for the elderly.
 - To provide the elderly with a better financial situation through cost sharing (electricity, water etc.).
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Main beneficiaries

Elderly people, Government staff, Low-income groups, People with disabilities

- 2014: Three elderly people (over 60) in one district.
 - Future prospects: Three elderly people per district (20 districts).
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Results

Effectiveness

- Renting of a large, unoccupied flat due to cost related difficulties (before the project).
 - Improve quality of life in an improved environment at a lower cost for elderly with low income.
 - End problems of solitude.
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Service quality

Accessibility:

- Flat fully equipped for reduced mobility citizens, located in the heart of the city district, close to shops and a local old people's home where the tenants can choose to eat and take part in the activities organised there.
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User satisfaction

- An improved living environment at low cost.
- Companionship.
- Increased activities.

Development

Design

The idea has been initiated by frontline staff both in the social affairs department of the city council and in the housing association called Caen Habitat.

Design time: 1 year

Testing

- Public consultation on the idea.
- Selection process to find an accessible flat, equipped with lift and ramp and caretaker, close to shops and services.
- Choice of a flat with 3 individual bedrooms with balconies, common living room, kitchen, and bathroom.
- The housing association renovated the flat, adapting it for the elderly.
- The city council equipped the common rooms and developed the financial procedures for the experiment.
- The city council looked for funding sources, obtaining a grant from the 'Fondation de France.'
- Communication launched in April 2011.
- Open day: October 2011.
- Installation of three tenants in August 2012.

Testing time: 3 years

Implementation

Tools used:

- Public consultation to ensure the idea was validated by the potential users.
- Creation of a partnership between various public authorities.
- No additional staff costs.

Resources used:

- Renovation costs: EUR 5 850.
 - Equipment of common areas: EUR 7 000.
 - Subsidy of EUR 7 000 for a first pilot and EUR 4 000 for a second pilot from 'Fondation de France.'
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Challenges and solutions

- Difficulties with the existing procedures regarding the allocation of housing benefits leading to the creation of new procedures.
 - Difficulty for the housing association to manage the potential complications between tenants, leading to an innovative contract between the city council and the housing association, with the city council becoming the tenant.
 - Difficulty how to manage the flat share (behavioural aspects, use of common areas, housework, etc.) leading to the creation of a contract between the city and each tenant and a set of rules to be respected by all tenants.
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Partnerships

Caen Habitat

Other Public Sector

The partnership was developed between Caen City Council and the local housing association, Caen Habitat. The project would not have been viable without this partnership as the city council is not a home owner and the housing association is not specialised in the management of the elderly.

Lessons Learned

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- A future housing offer to be developed which meets the wish of the elderly to live in their district as long as possible, in affordable, accessible housing.
 - A method of avoiding isolation of the elderly.
 - Attention must be paid to the behavioural aspects of the tenants, their motivation to flat share, and "societal" aspects of such a method.
 - For future such developments, individual toilets should be planned.
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Conditions for success

- A flat/house in the heart of a city district or village with shops, services and transport on hand.
 - A flat/house adapted to the needs of the elderly.
 - A mediator who follows the flat share and intervenes to calm situations of potential conflict.
 - Attention to be paid to the age of the tenants and their interests.
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