

Life Opportunities Trust has plans to expand

Ralph Verlander has been at the helm of Life Opportunities Trust in Hertfordshire, for the last 25 years after he met its founder, Jane Reynolds, while working at Leavesden hospital in capital planning.

"When care in the community was introduced it was a struggle to accommodate the amount of people to be re-housed and

Life Opportunities Trust is looking to expand beyond Hertfordshire and Middlesex. Chief executive **RALPH VERLANDER** explains how people with a wide range of disabilities are being helped to live as independently and positively as they can.

that's when Jane saw an opportunity to create something different which would meet these peoples' needs," Ralph began.

"Since starting out with a few properties in

the '90s we are evolving and by moving people out of hospitals we are keeping them in the community, helping them gain new skills. We enabled them to be more independent and live in the community. We've even had a couple of weddings - which goes to show we are empowering people to lead as normal lives as possible and that's our whole aim."

Research shows strong local demand for housing with care

Carterwood, a specialist chartered surveying practice, which operates exclusively in the long-term care sector, has published new research in conjunction with ARCO (Associated Retirement Community Operators) and its members to determine patterns of those moving, retiring and downsizing into extracare housing.

Local geography is a strong determining factor for people moving into an extracare scheme and Carterwood's research identifies key factors affecting how geography impacts on supply and demand. Residents moved to schemes within their local area, where available. The average moving distance was just over three miles - very similar to the care home market.

There were some differences between tenure, with local authority funded extracare schemes having lower moving distances (at under 2 miles), which can be attributed to local authorities often having nomination rights.

The research also showed that moving distances were equally low (at around 5 miles) in the leasehold market. There were some variations, with residents in 'middle market' schemes moving an average of 3.4 miles, while those in high-end schemes moving much further on average, at just under 20 miles.

ARCO executive director Michael Voges said the Carterwood research demonstrated strong

local demand for retirement communities.

"This is in line with the strong demand our members are reporting for this innovative type of housing with care," said Mr Voges.

"It demonstrates to local authorities and planners the need for increasing the provision of housing-with-care schemes.

"Simply put, if you build a scheme it will be mainly inhabited by local people. This should address fears that additional provision will cause an influx of older people to a particular area, increasing health and social care expenditure."

Carterwood director Ben Hartley said the research provided an interesting insight into travel patterns and it was fascinating to see that residents travelled relatively short distances, demonstrating that demand exists very close to extracare schemes.

"With the top end schemes we found that residents will travel further afield to enjoy the services they were seeking, which is not too surprising given that there are so few of these type of schemes in the UK."

■ The findings from the research are detailed in the latest edition of Carterwood's Focus Bulletin: <http://www.carterwood.co.uk/focus/>

■ See also 'Retirement housing set to pick up as ageing society boosts demand' - Page 45



RALPH VERLANDER:
'we hope to attract more private clients while not losing the balance of care.'

The charity provides residential and homecare for people with learning disabilities, dementia and Alzheimer's and adults with Downs Syndrome. It operates 12 homes in Hertfordshire and Middlesex.

"Life Opportunities Trust is committed to providing a quality service based on the values of privacy, dignity, independence and choice, and person-centred planning is at the heart of our approach, so we develop and tailor support programmes around each person's wishes and aspirations," said Ralph.

"LOT plans to broaden its area of operation outside of Hertfordshire and Middlesex. The charity hopes the growth will attract more private clients while not losing the balance of care. We believe LOT has a lot more to offer communities and people out there and we are committed to making our services even more invaluable for the future." **CT**

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