

Raising the Stakes workshop 26 and 27 April 2007

REPORT ON THE KITEMARKING COMPONENT OF THE WORKSHOP

Notes:

Most of the views below were expressed during the two one-hour group sessions on Kitemarking, on Friday morning. The report includes a few contributions made during the general discussions on Thursday, and after lunch on Friday.

At the workshop Alex Billeter gave a 15-minute presentation of the development the kitemark concept to date by EAC (see Kitemark Workshop.ppt). The presentation ended with 13 questions that needed to be answered by the group during the discussion; not all were fully addressed, nor did they all prove necessary at this stage.

The main questions discussed are summarised under 8 headings:

1. Do you agree with the idea of a kitemark for housing with care?

- Participants were in generally enthusiastic about the idea of a kitemark, although it had been expected by most, and hoped by a few, that the kitemark would be about minimum standards of facilities and services.
- One provider judged the kitemark valuable only as a first step towards the development of a trade association. A kitemark is like a hotel star rating which informs only on cost and facilities, but does not guarantee quality. A **trade association** would give confidence to consumers complies with standards that each scheme is visited each year

2. Do you agree with the proposal for a Mark for quality of information?

- The proposal seemed to make sense to all, although the need for basic standard of provision still remain high on the agenda of some, more specifically about 'extra care' as preferred by the Department of Health and the Housing Corporation.
- The remark under 1. (above) on the value of a kitemark as a first step towards the development of a **trade association** applies equally to a Mark for quality of information
- One participant remarked that the name 'Kitemark' (and other 'Mark' names) would be misleading, as it would be generally understood as referring to basic standards of provision, or to a code of practice. Even 'Quality of Information Mark' might not register in people's mind for what it is. A majority of the participants recognised the difficulty. It was also stated that if the proposed Mark was a first stage for a future Kitemark with basic standards of provision, the proposed name would be less misleading

3. How valuable do you think such a kitemark would be for your organisation?

- Most providers thought that a kitemark would become a valuable tool for marketing purposes, for supporting planning applications and for better information to the customers.
- Commissioners seemed to agree that the Mark could be of help in their commitment to implement strategies. They felt that it would help support planning applications, defining what the basic standards of information should be.
- One provider stated that a kitemark would not make any difference as their schemes are fully allocated before completion and only to local people. However he would fully support the foundation of a trade association.
- This provider saw kitemarking helping make people – including planners and commissioners – more aware of ECH, i.e. to “support the development of a dynamic and sustainable ECH market” (to quote one objective of the project)
- One provider stated that waiting lists are full anyway and that the kitemark would raise profile and wrong expectations.
- A private provider stated that, once established and used by a few, the kitemark would become an essential requirement for all the industry.

4. Do you agree with the eligibility criteria, the basic definition of housing with care?

There was general agreement with the proposed threshold of entry **defining Housing with Care as**

- Housing designed with the needs of frailer older people in mind
- Offering security of tenure, i.e.: own front door and a legal right to occupy the property
- Facilitating the delivery of support and care services
- With communal and catering facilities

5. Do you agree with the proposed accreditation process for the kitemarking process?

- **Self-assessment** was not discussed.
- The completion of **questionnaires** similar to those used by EAC or proposed by the workshop seemed generally acceptable
- Submission of **supporting material** such as photographs, plans and brochure was also acceptable
- Submission of supporting information is less clear cut. Information on rent and leasehold is agreed.
- Clarity on **service charges** could also be met by all
- **Costs of care services** are much more difficult to present fairly. Not all providers would undertake to comply.

6. Could the accreditation process include compliance with appropriate codes of practice or other existing standards?

- The idea in principle seemed to be well received

7. Should the accreditation process include the use of outcome measuring tools?

- The idea is accepted by some and resisted by as many.
- One private sector provider was opposed to this proposal for reasons of commercial sensitivity and data protection issues.
- It may be that outcome measures would best be left out, at least at this early stage.

8. Ideas on financing the Kitemark?

- One provider suggested that EAC approach say 10 of the leading providers asking them to share these costs between them
- One provider suggested that the development of the project could be financed by a major institution (Department of Health, Housing Corporation), or the Joseph Rowntree Foundation which could see it as a natural development of their recent Literature Review by Karen Croucher (Housing with Care for Later Life)
- One commissioner stated that her local authority could only help with other resources or secondment, but not directly with cost
- One commissioner stated that his local authority would support the Mark's development financially. For a commissioner, the Mark would become a very important tool to support a commitment for implement strategies.

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