

# On the safe side

Shirley Hall, on behalf of, Retirement Village Group

*Shirley Hall, on behalf of Retirement Villages Group, talks to us about the importance of choosing the right technology in integrated retirement communities (IRCs), and what she thinks the future will hold.*

Retirement Villages Group is a pioneer of the IRC model, operating 16 retirement villages, mainly in the south east of England. These contain more than 1,000 apartments and cottages which are home to 1,500 residents. We have a mix of urban and rural settings, so we can suit people who prefer to be near amenities and services, and those who prefer a quieter life in the countryside.

## **An ageing profile**

The average age of our residents is 86. Often, they've moved in when they were in their sixties looking to continue their independent lifestyle in a friendly and supportive community, but more recently we're seeing more residents come to us when they're in their early eighties. A priority for us, and for them, is to make sure they're safe and they have help on hand if they need it. One of the first things new residents often ask about is the 24 hour emergency response system. That's why we've chosen to work with Tunstall, because our experience has shown that their systems and services are so robust and resilient. They're also easy to use, for our staff as well as our residents.

## **Going digital**

With the digital transition happening in the UK, we worked with Tunstall to help us evaluate and review all of our emergency call systems, and then look at what we needed and come up with a solution that is future-proof, easy to use and easy to install. The new systems are reliable, up-to-date and really easy to link to other devices, depending on what people need. It was actually a very relaxed process; we described what we wanted to achieve and Tunstall gave us some options. We've been really delighted with the new systems, and residents feel much happier knowing they have a service they can rely on.

## **Better together**

We have a great working relationship. It's very collaborative. We talk about our issues and challenges and Tunstall really listens so that they understand the needs of our residents and we end up with a solution that will meet them. It's so important to work together to make sure we're shaping things with them in mind.

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## **Forward thinking**

Up until a few years ago, I thought that future proofing technology in this sector was all about digital, about screens, about tablets, but actually we're finding that so many of our residents now have their own devices. So, I can see it becoming more and more important to enable residents to use their own devices in combination with other technologies.

It's exciting to think about what the future might hold, and the ways our sector can work with technology providers to co-design and innovate the next generation of digital care.

