



## Community Care Flats At East Whins

Summary of an innovative concept that is evolving in the Findhorn Foundation Community

### A brief history

When the Duneland board acted as the client group for the architects of the co-housing cluster at East Whins a lot of thoughts went into the concept of the ground floor flats. This came soon after Eileen's death, who had been successfully cared for in her own home for three years of increasing dependency. Based on those experiences the brief was to make the flats compliant with the specifications for "housing for varying needs", i.e. wheelchair accessible. In April 2010 it dawned on us that these flats would be sold to individuals who may well not need these specifications for another twenty or thirty years and that the resource would be removed from those who may need it. The NFA Elder-circle considered this and came up with the bold vision to secure 3 of the flats for community control so that the resource could be made available should the need arise. Thus the foundations for what became the Park Housing Cooperative (PHC) were laid. The voluntary group of the PHC did sterling work in raising substantial funds over the last 18 months enabling the community to buy 2 of the ground floor flats (along with two 2-bedroom houses). And so the concept of Community Care Flats can become reality.

### The concept

The flats are a resource for our community that may allow us in the future to prevent a member from having to stay in hospital or to go into a nursing home because their accommodation is unsuitable for them to be cared for at home.

In our experience people prefer to stay in their own home until the end if at all possible. Given the quality of accommodation in the community with caravans/bungalows at The Park and rooms in the busy hive of Cluny, as well as other homes that may not be suitable, this is often not possible.

Should the situation arise that someone would become so dependent on care that they would have to stay in hospital or be transferred to a nursing home, the Community Care Circle will work with the sitting tenants in the flats and with the Land and Housing Trust (L&HT) Committee to find a solution that will enable the person to return to the community and be cared for here in one of the Community Care Flats.

We hold the vision for this to be a graceful and mutually enriching experience for the cared for, the sitting tenant, the carers and the community as a whole.

As we have never done this before we don't know how often such need will arise and how that need will be addressed in detail. We know that good communication with the sitting tenants and the L&HTT is crucial. Under the terms of the short assured tenancy, the tenant would be under a standard two month notice period, which would be given should this situation arise. However, the person who needs to be cared for may need the flat earlier than two months time. We have ideas of how this may work: the cared for may offer their own home as a house swap, if there is already someone in community care in a flat it may, in some circumstances, be possible to share the flat with a second person in need of care – who knows – only the future can tell how it can pan out. What we need to do at the moment is to hold the vision, communicate it clearly and attract tenants that are inspired by the concept and not afraid to be part of a process that may ask flexibility from them in return for the reward of living in low-cost housing of a high eco standard (with consequential low running costs) and being part of a caring community.