



# HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

## 2 February 2017

### SECOND DESPATCH

Please find enclosed the following items:

<b>Item A4</b>	Minutes of Previous Meeting	1 - 6
<b>Item B2</b>	Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence	7 - 28
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Evidence from Partners</li><li>• Evidence from another local authority (Homes for Haringey)</li></ul>	

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London Borough of Islington

## Housing Scrutiny Committee - 10 January 2017

Minutes of the meeting of the Housing Scrutiny Committee held at Committee Room 1, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 10 January 2017 at 7.30 pm.

**Present:**                   **Councillors:**           O'Sullivan (Chair), Erdogan, O'Halloran and Picknell

**Observers:**             Rose-Marie McDonald.

**Also present:**                                   Councillor D Ward

### Councillor Michael O'Sullivan in the Chair

#### **237        APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE (Item A1)**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Doolan, Gantly, Hamitouche and Spall, and Jim Rooke.

#### **238        DECLARATION OF SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (Item A2)**

None.

#### **239        DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS (Item A3)**

Rose-Marie McDonald declared a personal interest in Item B1, Housing Services for Vulnerable People: Witness Evidence, as a member of the Housing Disability Panel.

#### **240        MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING (Item A4)**

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

#### **241        CHAIR'S REPORT (Item A5)**

The Chair reported that, following the representation made by a Genesis Housing Association tenant to the previous meeting, a letter would be sent to the Chief Executive of Genesis Housing Association.

It was reported that a new Housing White Paper was due to be published in January and an update on this and the Housing and Planning Act would be presented to a future meeting.

**242**      **ORDER OF BUSINESS (Item A6)**

The order of business was amended to allow Age UK to present witness evidence before the Housing Disability Panel.

**243**      **PUBLIC QUESTIONS (Item A7)**

The Chair outlined the procedure for public questions and the filming of meetings.

**244**      **HOUSING SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE: WITNESS EVIDENCE (Item B1)**

a) Evidence from Age UK

The Committee received a presentation from Ismail Bahriyeli, Carers Services Manager, and Andy Murphy, Chief Executive, of Age UK Islington, on carers' experiences of housing services for vulnerable people. The presentation slides and a copy of the Carers News newsletter were circulated to members.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

- Age UK sought to provide a one stop shop to carers, providing information, advice and support. Age UK had 'one approach', which was to provide support to anyone, including carers, those being cared for, family members, or others providing support. Support was not limited to those who cared for the elderly.
- Services for carers aged under 18 were provided by Family Action.
- Mr Bahriyeli commented on the importance of identifying hidden carers, those who may be providing care but without accessing support services. It was emphasised that it was important to make people aware of the services available and promotional work was carried out in GP surgeries, Job Centres, and other community buildings.
- Age UK also worked to raise awareness of carers needs to professionals. For example, Age UK worked with trainee doctors at UCLH to champion the needs of carers.
- It was acknowledged that providing services to carers and specifically considering carer needs was a relatively new development. Age UK provided resources for carers and organisations working with carers on its website. A quarterly 'Carers News' publication was also produced.
- Age UK had carried out a survey of carers to gauge their opinions on housing services for vulnerable people. It was reported that 70% of carers registered with the Islington Carers Hub were female, the majority were in their 50s, and 13% of Age UK's casework was housing related. It was noted that this related to Islington's housing services, as well as housing associations and private housing.
- Age UK's survey identified four housing-related themes which were crucial to carers: rehousing, repairs, money (i.e. financial support with housing and utilities costs), and aids and adaptations.
- It was commented that casework sometimes focused on the lack of suitable accessible housing, such as ground floor flats. Feedback from carers on the council's services was generally mixed. It was reported that some carers were unaware of the services the council offered to vulnerable people.
- In response to a question, it was commented that Age UK Islington worked closely with Family Action, which provided support services to young carers. It was important to establish strong partnership arrangements to ease the transition to adult

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support services. It was commented that some carer support services for young people were either not available to adults or not as flexible, and this was sometimes surprising for young adults.

- A member commented that the council's housing supply would likely decrease as a result of national housing policy changes and this would further limit the housing options for vulnerable people. It was suggested that housing providers should consider the 'best available' option when receiving a rehousing application; as although there may be no ground floor flats available, it may be preferential for a vulnerable person to live on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor as opposed to the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. It was important to clearly communicate the lack of available housing and to manage the expectations of residents.
- It was queried if Age UK had amended their working practices in response to the worsening housing crisis. In response, it was advised that the organisation was seeking to work more closely with housing providers. Age UK was also working to encourage volunteering, so local people were able to care for vulnerable people in their communities, however it was commented that this was a long term goal and would take many years to develop.
- It was queried if Age UK regularly received case work from residents who were dissatisfied with Occupational Therapy assessments. In response, it was advised that such casework was received from time to time. Age UK was not in a position to contradict a professional assessment, however could request a re-assessment if appropriate.
- Age UK was proactive in seeking out vulnerable people and made calls to carers and the vulnerable and elderly to identify if their needs were being met or if their needs had changed. This was intended to identify possible issues early and to generate referrals before vulnerable people's needs escalated.
- Age UK continued to provide support to carers for up to two years if the person they cared for died, and made referrals to bereavement services.
- It was asked if carers themselves faced any specific housing issues. It was noted that Age UK provided advice to carers on succession rights, as this could be problematic in the event of a vulnerable person's death if not planned for.
- Members of the public from Kings Square TRA identified that 147 homes were being built at Kings Square, including 26 independent living units. It was noted that some of these units had two bedrooms and would be ideal for carers living with vulnerable people. It was queried how these units could be excluded from the Right to Buy to ensure that they remained as social housing for vulnerable people. The Executive Member for Housing and Development advised that the Council was not able to exempt properties from the Right to Buy and commented that the Council was campaigning against measures which would require local authorities to sell social housing. It was recommended that the residents write to Gavin Barwell MP, Minister of State for Housing and Planning. The Committee asked that Cllr Ward take up this matter on behalf of the residents.

The Committee thanked Mr Bahriyeli and Mr Murphy for their attendance.

### b) Evidence from the Housing Disability Panel

The Committee received a presentation from Andy Greene, General Manager of Disability Action in Islington, which facilitated the Housing Disability Panel. The presentation outlined disabled people's experiences of Islington's housing services and contributions were received from other members of the Panel.

The following main points were noted in the discussion:

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- It was queried how Islington Council was implementing co-production in housing services for vulnerable people; in particular, it was queried if disabled people could be further involved in the design, commissioning and delivery of services. It was commented that this would be the best way of ensuring that services were working for vulnerable people. The Housing Disability Panel was keen to contribute to this.
- It was queried if it was the intention to provide person-centred services, as it was not thought that disabled and vulnerable people were asked about the effectiveness and prioritisation of services on a regular basis.
- It was thought that the Council's protocols for joint working with disabled people were not effective. Although some teams championed the needs of service users, it was commented that others were particularly bureaucratic. It was suggested that the Council tended to revert to bureaucracy when dealing with more complex problems.
- It was emphasised that 'one size doesn't fit all' and it was important to use funds innovatively to provide person-centred and user-led services across the Council.
- It was commented that the housing services available to disabled and vulnerable people needed to be publicised further, with clear information on eligibility and who to contact about each service. It was suggested that no one officer seemed to have a detailed understanding of all of the services available. The preference of the Housing Disability Panel would be for one officer to be responsible for coordinating the housing offer for disabled and vulnerable people as this would ensure that clear information was available. It was suggested that such information should be publicised to all tenants, particularly new tenants.
- It was important for frontline staff to have knowledge of services for vulnerable and disabled people, and to have an awareness of the issues that vulnerable and disabled people face. It was suggested that one-off staff training sessions were insufficient and that staff should be routinely tested on their knowledge of services.
- It was frustrating for disabled and vulnerable tenants to repeat their needs to different sections of the Council. It was suggested that a shared ICT system across the Council, detailing the access and communication needs of vulnerable people, would help to improve customer service.
- It was commented that contractors carrying out capital works often were not aware of disabled and vulnerable tenants' needs and generally would not make reasonable adjustments. It was suggested that information should be shared with contractors working with vulnerable and disabled people. It was also suggested that the Housing Disability Panel could have a role in holding contractors to account through mystery shopping exercises. It was proposed that the Council should set standards for contractors relating to accessibility and the engagement of disabled and vulnerable people.
- Although it was welcomed that Council services were moving online, it was noted that half of people without internet access were disabled. It was important to help people without internet access to access services. It was also noted that some service requests had to be logged by telephone, which was not an accessible means of communication for deaf residents.
- A 'one stop shop' for vulnerable and disabled tenants would be welcomed; and would build relationships between officers and service users. It was commented that disabled and vulnerable people could find council services difficult to navigate and sometimes had to speak to multiple officers before getting the information they needed. It was indicated that less persistent residents did not contact other sections of the council after an initial rejection, and this resulted in vulnerable people not accessing the services they needed.
- The Committee considered the range of communication methods used by the Council, including digital notice boards and SMS messaging. It was commented that those with communication disabilities needed to be communicated with in an accessible way, and a web chat function would be welcomed. It was noted that the

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Repairs service had recently acquired tablet computers which would allow repairs staff to communicate with deaf residents through BSL interpreters.

- It was advised that Housing Operations was to carry out a fundamental review of the Council's housing offer over the next 18 months. It was intended to review how Housing worked with other services and how the service could be made more personalised and user-led, with a focus on integration and early intervention. Officers commented that they would engage with any residents who wanted to participate in this review.
- The Committee queried how Housing Operations would engage vulnerable people in the review of the housing offer. In response, it was advised that meetings with representative organisations such as DAII and the Housing Disability Panel would be useful; however feedback from individuals could also be received. It was important to engage with people with a wide range of vulnerabilities.
- A resident advised that a contractor of the Council removed her wheelchair without replacement, leaving her unable to leave her home for several days. Officers agreed that this was unacceptable and advised that such issues could be addressed through the Council's contract management procedures.
- In response to a question, it was advised that considering the accessibility of services from an early design stage was the best way of ensuring that services were accessible to disabled people. It was also thought that involving disabled people in the monitoring and evaluation of services would help to ensure their effectiveness.
- It was commented that officer training on disability, vulnerability and mental health should focus on specific skill gaps and what information was needed by staff to perform their roles effectively.
- A resident advised of a poor experience she had with a housing officer, who had arranged repairs on her behalf at times when she had previously stated she was unavailable due to medical appointments. The resident considered that this amounted to bullying and had experienced severe anxiety as a result. It was advised that the situation was only resolved after her case was taken up by DAII.
- It was proposed that housing services should publicise the accessibility and equality standards they set for their staff, in the same way as housing services set expectations and behaviour standards for tenants.
- A resident had been served with a noise abatement order as a result of playing loud music at unsociable hours. However, the resident was experiencing mental health difficulties at the time and this was known to both Housing and Adult Social Services. In the circumstances the resident considered that serving the order was insensitive.
- It was highlighted that issues which may be considered trivial could have an amplified impact for disabled people. For example, dog mess was particularly problematic for visually impaired people and wheelchair users, who may either not know this had been brought into their home, or face difficulties in cleaning the subsequent mess.
- A resident who used a wheelchair commented that her toilet was not accessible and she was not able to close her toilet door. This was particularly inappropriate when friends and family were visiting. She commented that she was unable to access home improvement works through the Decent Homes scheme; and although she had contacted the Council about adaptations, this had not been successful.
- A resident highlighted that the Council carried out maintenance works, but did not carry out home improvements. The resident was visually impaired and was unable to paint his fence, lay paving slabs in his garden, or install a new tap. He commented that he was willing to pay the Council to do this for him; however home improvements were not offered through the handyman service. It was suggested that relatively minor improvement works could have a significant impact on a person's wellbeing.

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- The Committee sympathised with those who had negative experiences of the Council's housing services and urged that residents contact their local ward councillors and ask them to take up their cases in such instances.
- It was agreed that the Housing Disability Panel should be consulted on the draft recommendations of the scrutiny review.
- Members of the Housing Disability Panel commented that the Council was not far off providing decent housing services for vulnerable people, however examples of poor performance and ineffective working practices had to be addressed and further engagement with disabled people in decision making and prioritising services was needed.

The Committee thanked those present for their attendance.

### **RESOLVED:**

That the Housing Disability Panel be consulted on the draft recommendations of the Scrutiny Review.

### **245 REVIEW OF WORK PROGRAMME (Item B2)**

Noted.

The meeting ended at 9.30 pm

**CHAIR**

# Housing services for vulnerable people

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## Presentation to Housing Scrutiny Committee 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2016

Tom Irvine, Service Improvement and Engagement Manager



Agenda Item 2

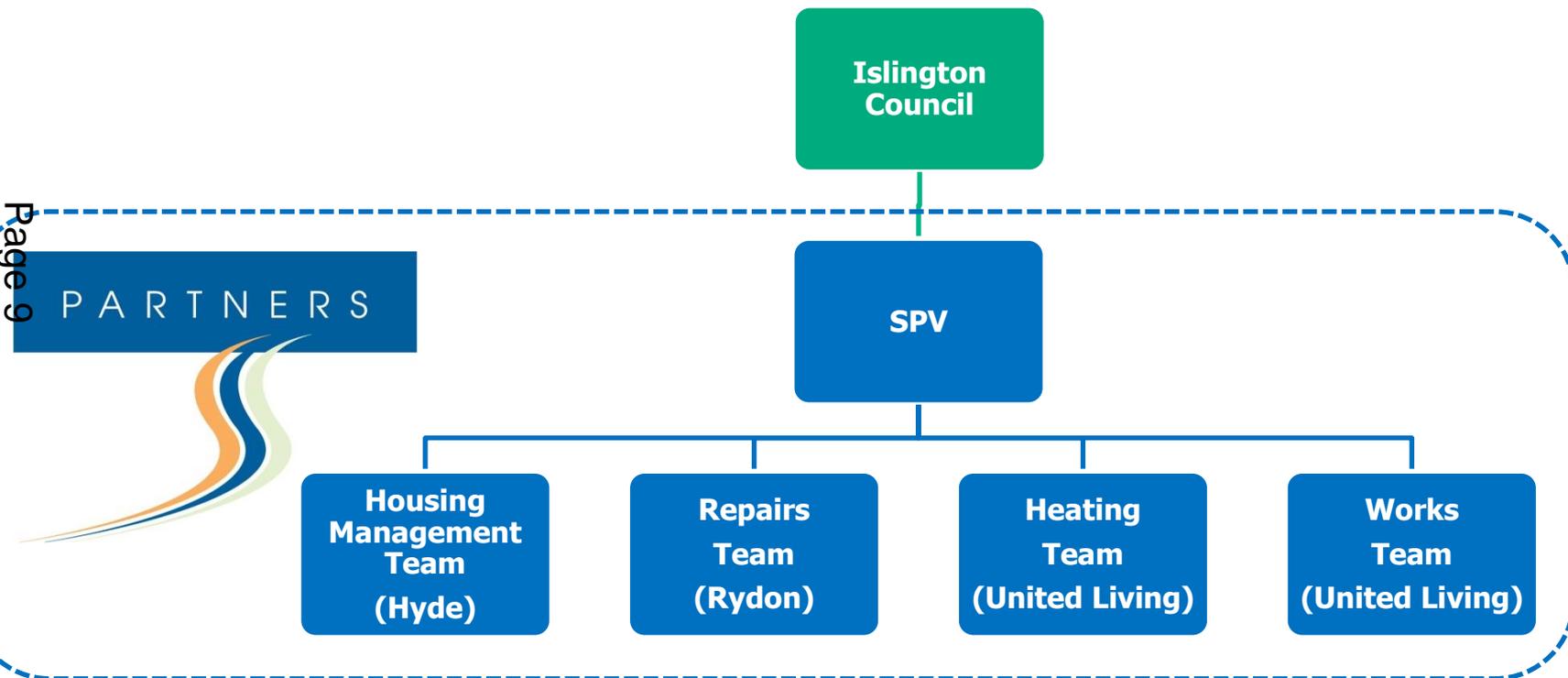
# Who are Partners?

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- Maintaining and managing 6,400 homes owned by Islington Council
- Two Private Finance Initiative (PFI) contracts
- PFI1
  - 30 years
  - 2003 - 2033
  - 2,300 homes
- PFI2
  - 16 years
  - 2006 - 2022
  - 4,100 homes

# Who are Partners?

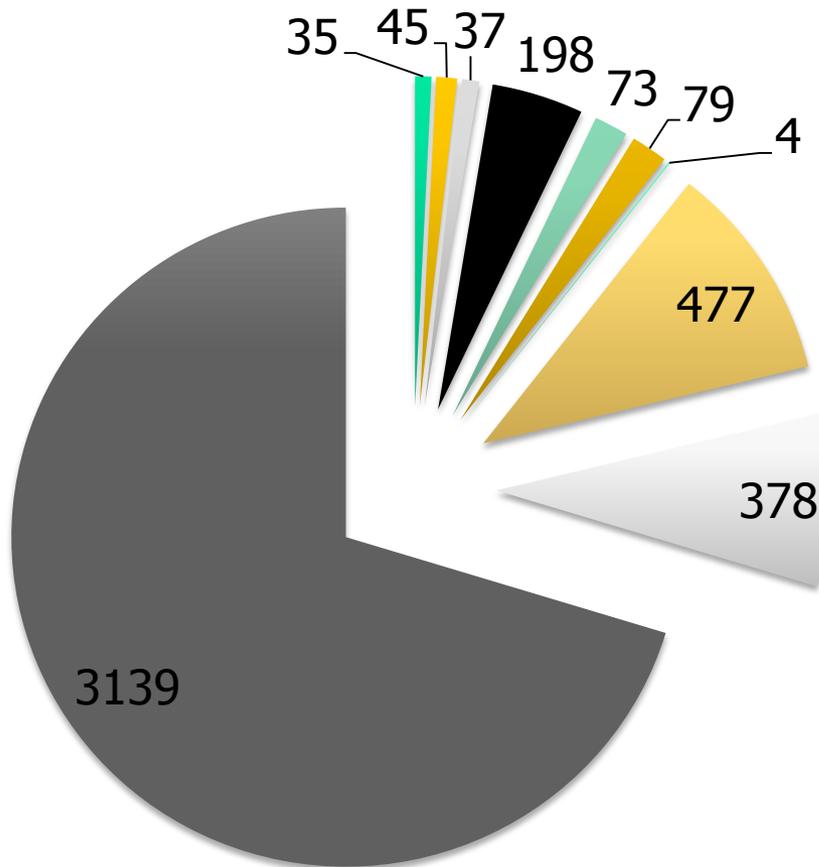
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# Disability / impairment

Tenants of homes managed by Partners where information is held

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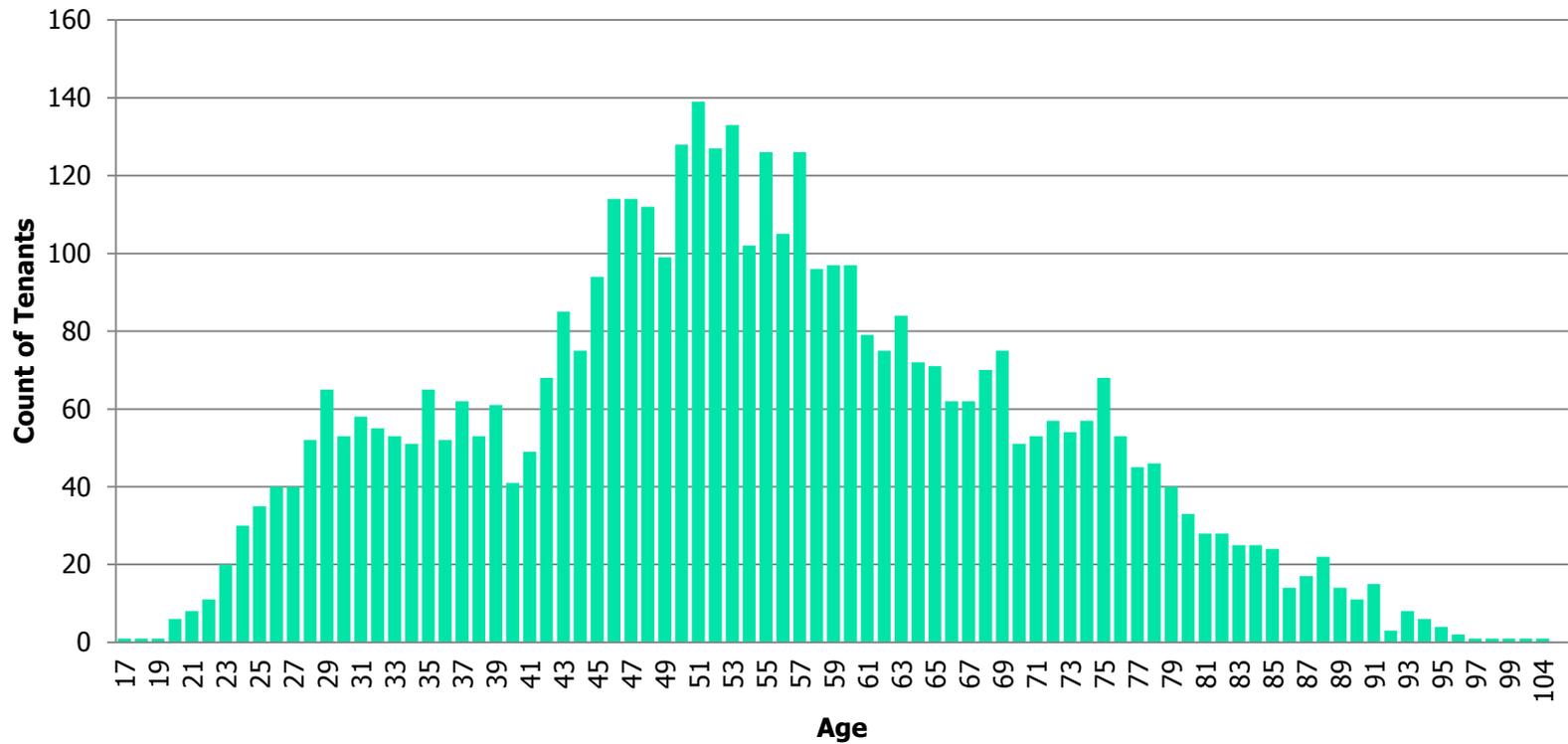


- Blind or visually impaired
- Hearing Impairment or BSL
- Learning Difficulties
- Mental Health Distress
- Mobility impairment
- Physical
- Wheelchair user
- Disability not specified
- Prefer not to say
- No Impairment

# Age

Tenants of homes managed by Partners where information is held

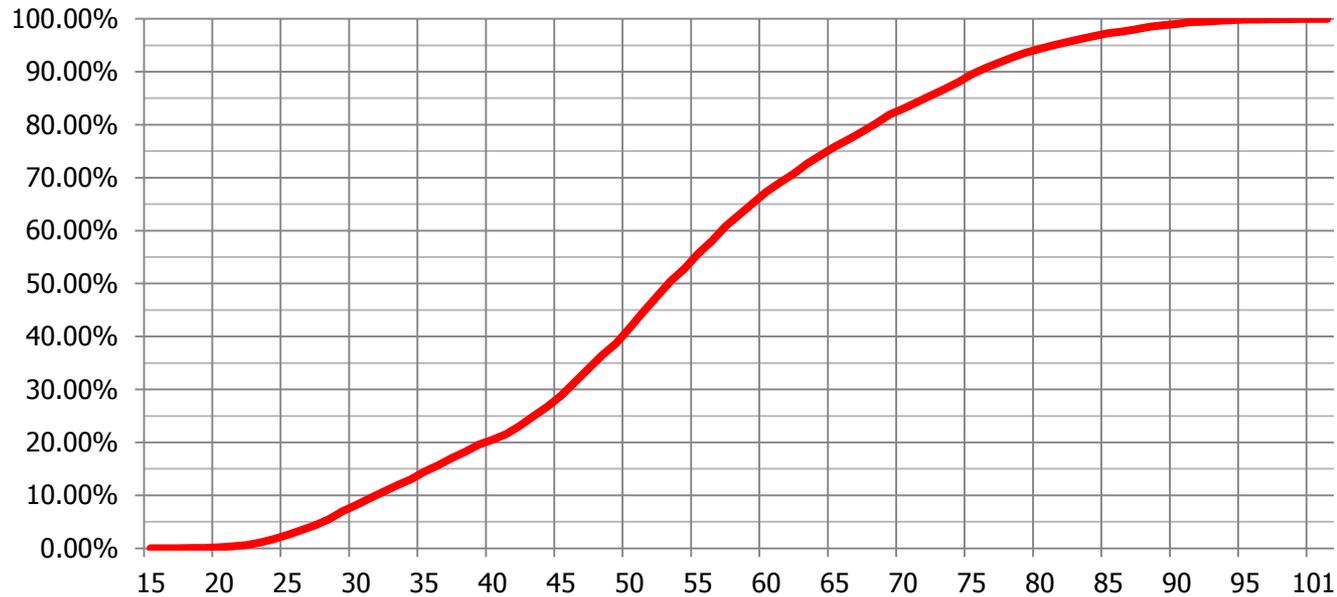
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# Age

Tenants of homes managed by Partners where information is held

## Percentage of tenants this age or younger



# General needs housing

- Partners manages general needs housing
- Our main services are:
  - Housing management services
  - Repairs and maintenance services, including cyclical maintenance programmes

# Close monitoring of performance

## Partners aims to provide consistently good quality services

PARTNERS PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD PF11			
September 2016			
<b>CONTRACTUAL KPIs</b>			
<b>KPIs - Monthly</b>			
	Previous Month	Reporting Month	Target
% of individual repairs completed within timescales	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%
% of communal repairs completed within timescales	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%
Compliance with telephony requirements	#N/A	#N/A	80.00%
Compliance with OOH telephony requirements	99.00%	98.86%	80.00%
Compliance with electronic access services requirements	99.87%	100.00%	90.00%
Correspondence answered < 10 working days	92.86%	98.26%	96.00%
Complaints answered < 15 working days	88.89%	100.00%	96.00%
Members enquiries answered < 10 working days	100.00%	100.00%	96.00%
Compliance with service & performance info. requirements	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%
<b>KPIs - Annual</b>			
	Apr 2016 to Previous Month	Apr 2016 to Reporting Month	Target
Resident satisfaction with repairs	97.19%	96.68%	75.00%
Average relet times (in calendar days)	14.30	14.77	27.00
% of gross annual rent roll collected	100.56%	100.61%	97.00%
Compliance with nuisance and harassment requirements	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Compliance with Tenancy changes requirements	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%
Compliance with Tenancy audit requirements	143.13%	151.81%	95.00%
Compliance with compensation requirements	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%

PARTNERS PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD PF12			
September 2016			
<b>CONTRACTUAL KPIs</b>			
<b>KPIs - Monthly</b>			
	Previous Month	Reporting Month	Target
% of individual repairs completed within timescales	99.61%	100.00%	95.00%
Average relet times (in calendar days)	12.32	12.86	27.00
Compliance with telephony requirements	#N/A	#N/A	80.00%
Compliance with OOH telephony requirements	99.00%	98.86%	80.00%
Compliance with electronic access services requirements	99.87%	99.88%	90.00%
Correspondence answered <10 working days	94.41%	99.37%	96.00%
<b>KPIs - Quarterly</b>			
	Previous Quarter	Reporting Quarter	Target
% of communal repairs completed within timescales	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%
Complaints answered <15 working days	97.87%	100.00%	96.00%
Members enquiries answered <10 working days	100.00%	96.43%	96.00%
<b>KPIs - Annual</b>			
	Apr 2016 to Previous Month	Apr 2016 to Reporting Month	Target
Resident satisfaction with repairs	96.29%	96.15%	75.00%
% of gross annual rent roll collected	99.34%	99.50%	97.00%
Compliance with nuisance and harassment requirements	100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
Compliance with Tenancy changes requirements	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%
Compliance with Tenancy audit requirements	126.36%	130.74%	95.00%
Compliance with compensation requirements	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%
Compliance with service & performance info. requirements	100.00%	100.00%	95.00%

# General needs housing

- Not specialists in providing support services
- Strong network of links with agencies and organisations who provide support
  - Where we identify – or residents report – needs which go beyond those our services can meet then in most cases we signpost residents, or make referrals, to the appropriate agency.

# Network –

Partners works with Islington Council

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- Islington Council delivers a range of support services including:
  - Social Services
  - **SHINE** (Seasonal Health Intervention Network)  
a “one-stop referral system for affordable warmth and seasonal health interventions”. A single referral to SHINE leads to an assessment for around thirty potential interventions.

# Network –

Partners maintains a directory of specialist support agencies

abuse adult **advice** age assisted benefits bereavement care  
carers centre charity **children** contact **council** directory  
disabilities domestic energy **families** free group handyperson  
health **help** **helpline** hoarding home hours info  
information **islington** mental mental health  
offers older open parents **people** problems provides  
referral **residents** scheme **services**  
social **support** tenants uk violence young

# Staff training

- Raising awareness of vulnerability
- Helping to identify vulnerability
- Recent examples include:
  - Mental health awareness
  - Safeguarding

# Additional / enhanced services

Partners provides some additional / enhanced services to vulnerable residents

- Quicker response times for heating and hot water repairs
- Discretionary repairs budget
- Some internal decorations through Islington Council's Assisted Decorations Scheme
- Adaptations specified by Occupational Therapy

# Identifying needs and risks

- Programmes of visits or calls to older or vulnerable residents to help identify any needs which are not being met
  - 2016/17 – following desktop review of information held about our residents and their homes, our Housing Management Team is completing a programme of visits to 70 vulnerable residents.
  - Previous years – a round of telephone calls to residents who haven't reported repairs for over 12 months.

# Real lives

There are many examples of our staff demonstrating care, understanding and a desire to help.

- For a family with a child who has Autism Spectrum Disorder, when noise transmission was affecting neighbour relationships, our officer arranged for carpet and underlay at Partners' cost.

# Real lives

There are many examples of our staff demonstrating care, understanding and a desire to help.

- A vulnerable resident affected by incontinence was struggling with keeping communal areas clean. Our officer arranged for a new easy-to-clean vinyl flooring in the communal area which has helped with neighbour relationships.

# Real lives

There are many examples of our staff demonstrating care, understanding and a desire to help.

- A vulnerable resident repeatedly missed appointments with another agency which was helping him achieve the move he wanted (and needed) into supported accommodation. One of our officers helped him make another appointment and went to his home to take him there.

# Thanks

- Thank you for the opportunity to speak to the Scrutiny Committee today.
- We look forward to hearing about the outcomes of the Review.



Homes for Haringey is keen to help residents to sustain their tenancies through both, support and development.

**We provide support as part of our core activities relating to income management, tenancy services and estates and neighbourhood services.**

Below is a list of initiatives and examples Homes for Haringey offer as additional services that are made available to vulnerable residents, including any special initiatives that are in place to support them.

- General approach is identify tenant's support needs, ensure appropriate support is offered, arrears process held temporarily, but remains the tenant's responsibility to pay the rent.
- At sign up we discuss and identify support needs relating to employment, welfare benefits, budgeting, debts, fire safety.
- We can fast track most adaptations that are needed to properties.
- From sign up, for the first 4 weeks New Tenant Liaison officer provides a personal service.
- Vulnerability information saved in SharePoint so available to other teams to help provide a joint up support service, including contact centre staff.
- 2 Posts introduced in 2014 to assist when arrears increasing and no contact prior to every legal action. They visit tenant, check details of household composition, income, and tenants explanation of why arrears increasing. May offer referrals to other services and encourage tenant to engage with them.
- When tenant on full housing benefit, and in receipt of most benefits HFH can apply to DWP for the water rates plus £3-70 to be deducted at source and paid to HFH, every 4 weeks in arrears.
- Referral to Key Support or Family Mosaic, for personal support and to sort out an issue.
- Relevant referrals to housing related support, Children's service, Adult Social services and Mental Health team work to provide particular support often on short term intervention to referred clients.
- When referrals made arrears process is put on hold waiting for outcome.
- Support offered to find work or training to progress towards work, some disabled tenants can qualify for benefits that exempt them from the cap.
- Assist Tenants with Discretionary Housing Payment.
- When vulnerable tenants miss rent payments or HB claim stops can indicate difficulties and we use this as a trigger point to meet with residents to identify support needed, and make appropriate referrals to any statutory or voluntary group.
- Our Financial Inclusion Team is linked with Haringey food bank and has issued food vouchers.
- Thames WaterSure plus 50% rebate for low income.
- In the new structure, we have 2 dedicated HB Assessment officers to fast track claims, especially at pre eviction stage.
- We carry out regular vulnerability checks by visiting tenants who are 75+ or flagged as vulnerable on our system
- We work with housing support services or specialist agencies in cases of specific vulnerability such as hoarding
- We are piloting a community outreach support service from sheltered schemes to vulnerable residents living in the locality, to provide additional visiting support and access to scheme facilities and events

- We provide a vulnerable tenants gardening scheme where we deliver gardening work for those tenants who have difficulty carrying out gardening work for themselves and who don't have other friends or relatives who can assist. Tenancy Services make an assessment of eligibility on the grounds of age or vulnerability. The work is carried out by a mobile two person team employed by the Parks Service.
- Estate Services Operatives will assist those vulnerable tenants who have difficulty disposing of heavy items.
- Estate Services Operatives will keep an eye out for known vulnerable residents and pass on any concerns to tenancy services.
- Estate Services will notify tenancy services if they identify any residents who are showing signs of vulnerability who may not already be known to us.

## Community Development

### Emphasis on prevention and early interventions especially for our residents who are vulnerable.

- Support to individuals who have complex needs to improve their economic capacity in order to sustain their tenancies.
- Targeted support to tenants who are struggling with their tenancies working closely with other teams via referrals – tenancy management, financial inclusion, new tenancy Liaison Officers, Case workers. Intensive one to one information advice guidance provided with clear action plans. Support and sign posting to specialist organisations to provide support including counselling services etc. Over 300 people received support – this includes some young people aged 16 to 24 with complex needs (drug, gang affiliated, mental health). Partnership with specialist organisations funded with specialist health professionals to deal with the underpinning mental health issues. A cohort of 10 young people now back in training, and employment in the last year (they are real role models for others).
- Support above includes single parents who we target through the children centres and special coffee morning in our facilities. Over 30 supported back into work. Some have never worked and have childcare challenges and language barriers. See case studies to illustrate support to 3 different groups:

## Case Studies

### Unemployed Male

- Ex-offender, serious crime involvement
- Complex needs
- Multiple barriers to employment
- Receipt of JSA
- Low skill level
- Improved employability skills
- In-work support and mentoring

### Single Mother

- Benefit Cap
- Long term unemployed
- Childcare commitments
- Receipt of benefits
- Threat of re-housing out of London
- Low confidence
- Secured employment
- Resolved childcare issues
- Benefit recalculation
- Budgeting skills and manage tenancy

### Young Unemployed Male

- Previous gang involvement
- Family breakdown
- Leaving Care Team
- Low self esteem and confidence
- Receipt of JSA
- Accommodation needs resolved
- Secured apprenticeship
- Earning a wage
- Improved career prospects

## Community support

### Support to supported housing and other vulnerable residents

We have over 1,400 tenancies in over 50 supported housing schemes. Various community development programmes developed through the 27 lounges to engage the residents - dealing with isolation, dementia, healthy living etc. This includes coffee mornings, health awareness sessions/action days, chair based exercises, zumba dance, walking projects, dementia awareness theatre productions, Broadway lunches. Others include trips to the seaside, garden competitions, food growing projects, and annual supported housing conference planned and delivered in partnership with the residents. There are 27 RAs in the Supported Housing Schemes and they all feed into the quarterly Supported Housing panel meetings – a strong voice for this group of residents.

An Active Disabled People's Forum which we facilitate as a sounding board to advise and provide feedback on our services.

Resident Digital Champions helping other residents to go on line (Digital inclusion a kind of barrier for everyday living and access to our services. The first cohort of digital champions mainly from the elderly (80%). They are leading the way to enable others to go on line (breaking the prejudice that the elderly are mostly harder to engage on line.

## Repairs

Enhanced repairs for tenants in supported housing schemes, residents over the age of 60 for some repairs (clear criteria to be met).

Handyperson scheme: There is the handypersons scheme which was introduced in September 2016 for residents over the age of 60 to help them with minor repairs that is their responsibility as a reasonable price provided by HRS (£25 an hour). HfH responded positively following Age UK not being able to provide the service in the Borough any more.

## Financial inclusion Team support for vulnerable tenants April 2013 to November 2016

### Welfare reforms

From April 2013 Financial Inclusion Team helped tenants prepare for welfare reform issues.

- Bedroom Tax; began with 1,520 cases now down to 1075. Helped tenants register for mutual exchange, and for home connections move to smaller properties. Held 4 public events to advise and assist tenants.
- Benefit cap; usually affects 30-40 HFH tenants, most large families or disabled tenants. When Benefit cap was reduced in November 2016, team contacted all council tenants affected offering further support. Assisted some disabled tenants to apply for disability benefits that exempt them from the cap.
- Assist Tenants with Discretionary Housing Payment, (DHP) Over 200 applications since 2013, value over £100,000.
- FIT check when HB suspended or cancelled. Check actions required by tenant to restore claim, or if HB has information request HB to assess. FIT also challenge HB's for tenants, approx 6 cases each week, value ranges from less than £5 to over £18,000.

- Supported housing service charges, project in 2015 to help to increase tenant income or cut outgoings. Helped several pensioners to apply for Attendance Allowance.
- Thames WaterSure plus - 50% rebate off water rates for those on low income. Many individual tenants helped to claim, particularly elderly, and in 2015/16 had a unique agreement with Thames Water to take over 1,000 cases direct from financial inclusion. In 2016 Thames changed to only accepting individual applications.
- Food bank: Registered with Haringey Food Bank and provided vouchers to those in need, often with no other support.
- Universal Credit: Contact with each tenant making a new claim for universal credit offer advice and assistance on steps to take, budgeting, emergency assistance etc.
- Advice in how to open a bank account for those have never had one. At least 4 tenants personally taken to bank appointment.
- Assistance to some very vulnerable tenants that needed handholding through making an initial claim for different welfare benefits, including home visits, assistance to apply for documents, providing proof of identity, national insurance numbers etc.

#### **From December 2016**

- Preparing advice leaflet for tenants affected by reduced benefit cap.
- Preparing more comprehensive advice package to new claimants for universal credit, (benefiting from previous individual advice)
- FIT involved in Review of early interventions at sign up stage to sustain tenancy.
- FIT involved in discussion how to improve recording and collection of data on vulnerability. Then how to use this to improve service offered.
- Plans to develop new links with CAB and credit union, advice on alternative sources of finance to combat pay day loans, and see if we can identify and combat, or provide alternatives, to loan shark activity.
- To improve information on website, Haringey app on welfare benefits.
- Improve all HFH staff, call centre and customer service awareness of welfare benefits, particularly universal credit introduction to improve advice and triage as more residents go onto universal credit in next 5 years.