

HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

REVIEW OF HOUSING SERVICES FOR VULNERABLE PEOPLE

DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Housing Services should clarify their definitions of vulnerability and disability, and how these relate to each other.
2. Housing Services should further publicise the shortage of council housing in order to set realistic expectations of what residents may be able to successfully bid for. It is recommended that anonymised case studies are used where appropriate to illustrate the shortage of housing and to help disabled and vulnerable people choose the 'best available option'.
3. That the information on housing services for vulnerable people be reviewed to provide a comprehensive resource, setting out the services provided by the council, eligibility criteria, any limits to that support, and advice on how to access services that the council does not provide. This should be provided in a range of accessible formats, as required by legislation.
4. Key online customer processes be reviewed to identify and close gaps in accessibility. All housing transactions should be able to be carried out without use of a telephone or having to visit council offices; the introduction of a webchat function would be welcomed. However, it should also be recognised that exclusively online services are not accessible to all.
5. The council should review its information governance responsibilities and data sharing agreements to ensure that the support needs of residents are known to the services that need this information. It is important that housing services and contractors can access residents' data securely to enable them to provide high quality services to vulnerable and disabled people.
6. Consideration be given to how the voices of vulnerable and disabled people can be heard earlier in decision-making processes on procurement, commissioning and designing services; and how vulnerable and disabled people can be further involved in service monitoring and evaluation.

7. Housing Services should review how staff are trained, kept up to date, and access information on how to best support tenants with additional needs. This review should be in conjunction with service users, to identify knowledge and skills gaps and agree how these should be resolved. Staff need to understand how additional needs will have a practical impact on their work and their interactions with residents.
8. A comprehensive needs matrix should be developed to enable housing services to record the needs of vulnerable and disabled people in greater detail. This will help to ensure that staff have the right resources and are aware of how they need to adapt their services for those with additional needs.
9. When moving into a council property, disabled and vulnerable tenants should be consulted on the repairs and adaptations that are required to the property. The works to be carried out should be confirmed in writing with indicative timescales to ensure that both the council and the tenant have mutually agreed expectations.
10. Housing services should publish the standards which they seek to meet when communicating and engaging with disabled and vulnerable people, and should consider reviewing service standards and feedback mechanisms with service users.
11. In order to develop the relationship between the council and local communities, consideration should be given to making the Housing Operations service more 'holistic', whereby a greater range of services are provided to residents on a more local basis.
12. Housing Services should set clear expectations for contractors about working with disabled and vulnerable residents; this should include standards for staff training and accessibility. Compliance should be enforceable and regularly monitored to ensure that contractors are compliant with relevant disability legislation and that they are responsive to the needs of vulnerable and disabled people. Housing contractors should also be required to report any welfare concerns they have to the Housing service.

13. Liaison between housing, social services and NHS services be reviewed in regards to hospital discharge arrangements; to ensure that reception centres and other relevant housing services are aware of care needs and that disabled and vulnerable people are fully supported.

14. Service user groups should be invited to participate in the forthcoming review of the council's housing management services, and other service reviews as appropriate.