

Cannock Chase Council Housing Services Vulnerability Policy

Introduction

Cannock Chase Council Housing Services manages 5,164 council homes. Our aim is to contribute towards maintaining balanced and sustainable communities and we will work towards providing Housing services that are able to respond effectively to the needs of individual households.

Tailoring our housing services to meet the needs of individuals is important to us, in terms of the many issues faced by those most in need that have implications when delivering the Housing Service. As such, tailoring our services can have the benefit of reducing rent arrears, lowering eviction rates and court action proceedings, reducing rates of tenancy abandonment and working towards having less unrecoverable debt among our tenants and the wider community.

In addition, providing tailored services, to meet the individual needs of our customers – this will allow people to enjoy a good quality of life and live as independently as possible. Moreover, it is the responsibility of Cannock Chase Council Housing Services to respond to issues that could affect the physical and/or mental health and general well-being of individuals and their immediate household members.

People being in need of tailored services does not mitigate a tenant from their responsibility to abide by their tenancy conditions but it is accepted that some tenants will require help in meeting this responsibility and therefore this Policy aims to outline how in association with Key Partners, how we try to help those most in need.

1. Aim of this Policy

The aim of this policy and supporting procedures therefore is to outline how to identify and support new and / or existing customers who are, or who may become vulnerable and thus require a tailored service whilst in their tenancy.

As part of our **Tenancy Sustainability Strategy** we will look to provide support at the Pre-tenancy stage and through the life of the tenancy and tailor services for any individual household who may experience difficulty with meeting the obligations of the tenancy conditions, as well as support with every day living.

Our aim is to alleviate poverty, prevent homelessness, keep families together, support the vulnerable in the local community, assist people who are suffering financial hardship and provide assistance with employment and with training and education.

2. Definition: Who is Vulnerable

Cannock Chase Council does not assume that whole groups of people are in need of tailored services or does not rely solely on the legal definition of who is seen as 'vulnerable' although this definition must be applied when referring to issues around Safeguarding.

Within this Policy, we will look to provide support and tailor services for any individual or household who may experience difficulty with meeting the obligations of the

tenancy conditions as well as support with everyday living.

Being 'in need' in terms of service provision may be due to a single problem or physical or mental health condition but equally it can be more fluid, and or less permanent.

Individuals who may be in need of additional support, a tailored service can include:

- Frail Elderly
- Young Person at risk of failing their tenancy
- Ex-Offenders or people at risk of offending
- Victims or people at risk of ASB/Hate Crime and or Domestic Violence
- People with substance/alcohol misuse issues
- People with a serious disability
- People suffering poor Mental Health
- Financial Hardship/Multiple Debts
- People Leaving Care
- People who have difficulty in speaking, reading, understanding English
- People with a physical/sensory/learning disability
- People not coping with running a home

We hold a profile of vulnerability reasons used to identify with an individual who may be in specific need of additional support.

We will consider each individual case on its own merit to ensure the appropriate type and level of support and contact is provided.

3. Objectives of this Policy

The specific objectives of this policy are therefore as follows:

- To ensure that the provision of service to tenants in need of support remains a priority and is embedded at all levels within Housing.
- To develop operational procedures and supporting data management in order to help build and 'systemise' current working practices.
- To develop robust referral processes both internally within the Housing Service and with external Partners to ensure early help and intervention is in place and that the appropriate specialist support is provided.
- To collect up to date information and improve the use of customer profiling information intelligence collected, in order to respond more effectively to customers in need of support.
- To develop a better understanding of the number of tenants 'most in need' according to the vulnerability indicators adopted and to better understand the type and level of support and contact being provided. This in turn will help planning and thus help to target resources more appropriately.

- To work with those customers most in need to reduce the risk of them not meeting their obligations in relation to their Tenancy Agreement.

4. Identifying with those customers in need of tailored services and support.

Tenants in need of support can be identified at the pre-tenancy, the viewing or offer or sign up stage of a new tenancy. Support needs may also be identified whilst dealing with existing tenants, such as when dealing with tenancy issues regards, repairs, Anti-Social Behaviour, domestic violence, rent arrears, at tenancy audit, property visits, or other breaches of tenancy such as annual gas servicing, no access.

To enable us to do this, we have introduced a document with 'supporting procedures' which will allow us to identify with each individual tenant and their support needs and this information will be recorded, measured and monitored as having either low, medium or high level support and contact requirements.

5. Responding to those customers in need of tailored services and support

Assistance and Support will continue by the Tenancy Sustainment Team throughout the tenancy, depending on circumstances, to assist customers in managing and sustaining their tenancies. This will be provided at a local level in conjunction with the teams within Tenancy Services.

Where a tenant or household member is recorded as having 'additional support needs', depending on the level of need and level of support required, they will be assessed, scored and categorised as Low, Medium or High priority. This will help to determine the frequency of contact required with the tenant to ensure that they are supported appropriately and that their needs are being met.

For some people, especially those with specific physical or poor mental health issues, child welfare issues or those facing more complex family situations. We recognise that referrals are necessary to other Key Partners such as Social Care Providers or other services to be the most appropriate provider of support or Service. In these instances there will be a need for partner agencies to take the lead. We will therefore work in partnership with other providers to achieve the best outcome for our customers.

6. Monitoring Service Delivery and Performance

The Vulnerability Policy itself will be reviewed in line with any corporate or legislative changes and amendments which may be necessary.

Our success in achieving our objectives under this Policy will be measured in a number of ways:

- Analysis of the number of tenants 'in need of support' at Pre-Tenancy stage and through Tenancy Sustainment referrals identified in our performance.

- A reduction in the number of evictions or otherwise failed/ failing tenancies involving a vulnerable person or household.
- An increase in the customer profiling data held.
- Zero complaints based on the failure to support a tenant in need.
- Reduction in anti-social behaviour, tenancy breaches and abandoned properties

Annual performance reports shall be provided detailing, the number of tenants identified by the range of vulnerability indicators and tenancy support outcomes in place.

7. Equality Impact Assessment

We will ensure that the service is delivered in a fair and accessible way to all our customers regardless of; gender, race, ethnic, religion or sexual orientation, and due regard will be given to the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty.

For monitoring purposes, the Council includes decants within the repairs and tenancy report and within our equal opportunities annual report.

8. Monitoring & Review

The policy will be reviewed every 3 years by CCDC. The Policy will be revised in accordance with any future legislative changes as and when they occur.

9. Associated Policies

ASB Policy
 Allocations Policy
 Safeguarding Policy
 Domestic Abuse Policy
 Gas Heating and Safety Policy