

# Eden Housing Association

## Vulnerability Policy and Procedure



### 1. Background

#### 1.1 Aims

The aims of this policy are to provide a framework for Eden Housing Association (EHA) and its partners to assist vulnerable residents within properties owned or managed by EHA, and housing applicants, to sustain the best possible level of independent living.

#### 1.2 Definition

People from all walks of life can experience vulnerability at some point in their lives so any definition of vulnerability must cover a wide remit. The definition used for the purposes of this policy is:

***An individual or household experiencing difficulties with everyday living due to financial, educational, health, employment, learning, language, behavioural, family, social, age or other circumstances or any combination of these***

Vulnerability can be a variable state, and can occur at particular points in life such as bereavement and can be temporary, periodic and recurring due, for example, to mental distress, can be ongoing or can increase over time. Within a housing context, the indicators or points of vulnerability can include:

- Homelessness
- Hospitalisation
- Periods following discharge from hospital or other institutional care
- Periods of sustained illness at home
- Period of change from supported accommodation to independent living
- Evidence of harassment or abuse toward the individual or household
- Evidence of anti-social behaviour by the individual or household
- Relationship Breakdown
- Domestic Violence
- Arrears of rent or other debt problems
- Repeat homelessness
- During and following substance abuse
- Deterioration in mobility due to accident or illness
- Failing memory / coping skills due to injury or illness
- Isolation
- Mental Health Issues

### 1.3 Links

This policy has links with the Estate and Tenancy Management Policy and Procedure, the Supported Housing Policy, the Child Protection Policy, Cumbria Multi-agency Policy for the Protection of Vulnerable Adults at risk from abuse, the Rent Arrears Policy and Procedure, the Anti-Social Behaviour Policy and Procedure, Aids and Adaptations Policy and the Racial Harassment Policy and Procedure.

## 2. Support for Vulnerable General Needs Tenants

### 2.1 Identification of support needs

Support needs of general needs tenants are identified at the earliest opportunity either at the home visit or during the homeless application process, prior to an offer of tenancy or at the sign-up or new tenant visit. If for any reason the support needs are not identified at an early stage, then they may be identified whilst dealing with other tenancy issues such as anti-social behaviour, rent arrears, poor condition property (PCP) visits or other breaches of tenancy. Also, we have an arrangement with our contractors that they will report any concerns they pick up whilst undertaking repairs and maintenance visits.

### 2.2 Customer Profiling

The Association also seeks to identify vulnerability by customer profiling. Every tenant is asked to provide details of any particular needs or problems in order that we may seek to tailor our service to meet those needs. These details are recorded on Orchard and on a database so that all staff are aware when dealing with a particular customer. Tenants have an opportunity on the customer profiling form to let us know if they feel they require support.

### 2.3 Support Provision

Support may be provided in a variety of ways, although this list is not exhaustive:

- **Support by EHA Housing Officers** – EHA housing officers provide low level and flexible support but those people who need ongoing, specialist or intensive support will be referred to one or more of the agencies below.
- **Cumbria Action for Social Support (CASS)** – the Association has an ongoing close working relationship with CASS who provide floating support for any tenant who has difficulty maintaining a tenancy. In particular CASS specialise in helping those at risk of offending or with drug or alcohol problems.
- **Impact HA**– the Association has an ongoing close working relationship with Impact who provide floating support for any tenant who may have difficulty maintaining a tenancy.
- **Let Go** – provide emotional and practical support to people experiencing domestic violence.
- **Shelter** – provides support to people at risk of losing their homes, usually due to rent arrears. We have an arrangement with Shelter whereby we refer tenants in

rent arrears to them at the point where we serve a Notice of Seeking Possession (subject to the correct authorisations being in place).

- **Cumbria Alcohol and Drug Advisory Service (CADAS)** – CADAS offers support to people who have alcohol, drug or gambling problems. They also offer support to families of people who are experiencing these problems.
- **Disability association Carlisle and Eden (DaCE)** – DaCE provides welfare benefits advice and independent living support.
- **Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)** – the CAB provide advice and assistance to people with multiple debt problems. Advocacy service to older people, those with physical disabilities and mental health problems.
- **Connexions Cumbria** – provide advice on a range of issues affecting young people between the ages of 13 and 19.
- **Cumbria CC Children’s Services** – we make referrals to Children’s Services as and when necessary, particularly where there are child protection issues. Case conferences are requested in complex cases where there are multiple issues requiring a joined-up approach by several agencies.
- **Cumbria CC Adult Social Care** – we work closely with social workers to offer support, advice and counselling on a range of issues from disabled car badges to short or long term respite care. We make referrals and are involved in case conferences when a multi-agency approach is required.
- **Community Mental Health teams** – working together with these teams ensures that a joint approach is taken to support and enable those experiencing problems.
- **Victim Support** - offers free & confidential support and advice to victims of crime
- **Royal British Legion** – offers support for ex-service people on a range of matters, including war pensions, convalescence, aids & adaptations.
- **Eden Voluntary Society for the Blind & partially sighted (EVSB)** – who offer support, advice and grants for the purchase of aids.
- **Eden Carers** – works closely to ensure that people who are caring for others on a voluntary basis at home are adequately supported.
- **Alzheimer’s Society** – who offer support, information and advice to people with dementia and their carers, an advocacy service and home support.
- **Age Concern** – offers advice, day care and a range of support services for older people. We work jointly with them on a range of issues.
- **Gay Cumbria** – provides support to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered people in Cumbria
- **Cumbria Deaf Association** – provides encouragement, practical support, learning opportunities, health and social care as well as access to a wide range of individual and community activities to deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and DeafBlind people
- **Cumbria Multi-Cultural Service** – provides information, advice and advocacy to people from all black and minority ethnic backgrounds

### **3. Support for Vulnerable Older People**

#### **3.1 Identification of support needs**

The Association has a supported housing team who assist with the assessment of the type of property and associated support needs. This begins at the point of application and once the individual moves in to their new home, a member of the supported housing team will complete a full Support Plan that is agreed with the individual. This is designed to pick up on a range of issues and identify any areas of vulnerability with the individual. These support plans are then reviewed on a regular basis.

#### **3.2 Support Provision**

In addition to providing a range of sheltered accommodation, we offer a mobile visiting service to older and vulnerable clients in the community. The Association also provides community alarms, which are a means for calling for assistance in any type of emergency where help needs to be summoned quickly. Our supported housing team is trained with the aim to promote independence and choice to enable people to live as full a life as possible. Our staff work to maintain the health of individuals both mentally and physically, to provide advice and support in a flexible way and to ensure privacy is respected at all times.

We have a continued commitment to close partnership working with many health and social care professionals and with other agencies in the delivery of services to this client group. We accept referrals for our services from Adult Social Care, Community Support workers, G.P's etc, along with individuals, their families or carers. We are committed to providing support, reassurance and peace of mind to people who feel vulnerable, at risk, alone or isolated within the community.

The other support provision listed in 2.3 is also available to older people.

### **4. Staff Training**

All relevant Eden Housing Association staff will be trained in a variety of subjects related to vulnerability. This will include:

- Mental Health Awareness
- Protection for Vulnerable Adults at risk of abuse
- Child protection
- Drug and Alcohol Awareness
- Needs Assessment & Support Planning
- Coping with Stress – working with clients in stressful situations
- Equality & Diversity
- Domestic Violence

## **5. Procedures and Targets**

### **5.1 Procedures**

The support needs assessment form at appendix A will be completed for both general needs and supported housing tenants or applicants. A Housing Officer will do this as early as possible either before or at the start of the tenancy. Existing tenants will also be offered support as and when the need arises. If the Housing Officer has reason to believe that there is a risk to either staff or to the community then a separate risk assessment will be undertaken.

A list will be maintained of those people who are currently considered to be vulnerable and receiving support. We will also maintain a list of those who have been offered support but who have refused it. The Housing Officers and Housing Manager will review these lists on a quarterly basis to ensure that people are receiving the most appropriate support.

Where appropriate, we will adapt our existing service provision for vulnerable people, ensuring that we take a sensitive and supportive approach. This may involve doing repairs more quickly or adapting our approach to enforcement of tenancy conditions such as rent arrears recovery.

The Supported Housing team will hold the personally agreed support plans on the relevant case files for each person receiving support from them. These will be reviewed by the Supported Housing Officers on a regular basis or when there are changes to circumstances that might affect the level of support being received and/or required. The Supported Housing Manager will review these annually.

### **5.2 Targets**

Our target is to provide appropriate support to 100% of those people who require it and will accept the support offered. The success of this policy will be measured by satisfaction surveys and customer feedback. We would also aim for a reduction in the number of possession orders and evictions, a reduction in the incidence of ASB complaints, a reduction in repeat homelessness, and a reduction in those requiring Residential Care, due to lack of appropriate support. As a result we would also expect an increase in those who are enabled to maintain independent living.

## Needs / Support Assessment Form

Name:	Address:
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Please let us know if you require any support or have any particular needs for the following:

Type of Support	Tick if required	Comments
Advocacy (speaking on behalf of tenants/residents)		
Communication (e.g. translation)		
Budgeting and managing finances		
Claiming welfare benefits		
Safety and security of the home		
Move on aspirations		
Setting up and maintaining a home		
Maintaining a tenancy		
Personal safety and risk		
Mobility, aids and adaptations		
Medication		
Physical health and hygiene		
Emotional well being and mental health		
Substance misuse		
Family and social contacts		
Social and leisure interests		
Training and employment		
Cultural and faith needs		
Housing need		

Child care			
Parenting Skills			
Practical home care			
Have you used any other support services recently?	Yes	No	If yes, please specify:
Name/contact details of any other support worker(s)			
Have you any other concerns?	Yes	No	If yes, please specify:
Recommended Action / referral:			
Housing Officer:		Date:	
<p><b>Data Protection Act 1998 - Disclosure of Information</b></p> <p>Eden Housing Association enjoys close working relationships with CASS, Social Services, GP's, Shelter, Citizens Advice Bureau, Health Authorities and other support agencies. There may be occasions when we need to ask for or provide information to these bodies where, for example, you are in danger of losing your tenancy because you have support needs. In any such cases we will try to help you to overcome any problems you might be experiencing by working with these other bodies and thereby help you to remain in your home. In order to share information about your circumstances with these other agencies we need you to sign this form to give your consent. You have the right to withdraw your consent at any time and need only to tell us if this is the case.</p>			
I understand that the above information will be used to access appropriate support and information will only be passed to third parties for the proper conduct of this function.		Signature:	