

Investing in independence

Housing for vulnerable people strategy



THE NATIONAL AFFORDABLE HOMES AGENCY



July 2007

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About us

The Housing Corporation is the government agency that funds new affordable homes and regulates housing associations in England.

This strategy sets out how we will engage with housing providers and support them in responding to the needs of vulnerable people, working with local and health authorities, the Department of Health, the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) and others.

Foreword

As the national affordable homes agency, investing in the independence of vulnerable people is a core part of the Housing Corporation's business.

Providing people with a home makes a real difference to their lives. It provides a critical platform for education, health, life chances, opportunities, wellbeing and happiness. For vulnerable people, a home fulfils this role even more acutely. It can be a place where they learn to live independently or where they can be part of a supportive environment with others.

That is why we have invested over £2 billion in supported housing. We have also invested over £30 billion in mainstream affordable homes – homes which are also increasingly housing vulnerable people who have achieved greater independence living in their own homes with support.

Today, one in four registered social landlords provides specialist supported housing and nearly 35% of their staff are involved in care and support.

In 2005 we published our first vulnerable people strategy. As a result, we have been able to invest £385 million in 2006-08 in housing for vulnerable people, almost doubling the investment during the previous two years.

This new strategy and action plan sets out how we intend to do more. It spells out how we will work with housing providers, local, regional and national government, the third sector and others to ensure that the needs and aspirations of vulnerable people are met.

The Housing Corporation has embarked upon an exciting journey towards a new national homes agency and new regulatory arrangements. In this strategy we present not only a clear agenda and work plan for today, but also an important contribution in shaping policy and delivery for the future.



Peter Dixon
Chairman

Strategy statement

The Housing Corporation is committed to delivering affordable homes within strong, thriving neighbourhoods and communities. We believe that a strong and sustainable community or neighbourhood benefits from the inclusion, and responds to the needs, of all its members, including those who are vulnerable.

Our aim is to use our investment and regulatory powers to secure the provision of homes within existing and new communities that respond to vulnerable people's particular requirements for support, care and self-determination, thereby maximising their quality of life.

Housing providers are key players in the creation of mixed and sustainable communities, providing homes and support and care services for vulnerable people, within a strategic framework set by regions, local authorities and the health service.

The provision of appropriate support is key to resettlement, promoting tenancy sustainment and the prevention of homelessness. Support may be for short-term intervention or to meet longer-term needs and can be delivered in both specialist accommodation or to residents in general needs housing.

Aims and objectives

The Housing Corporation will invest a significant proportion of our capital funding programme on schemes that will directly benefit vulnerable people.

We will achieve close co-ordination between our funding and regulatory systems and those of other parts of government.

We will identify and promote best practice models for the provision of housing, care and support for vulnerable people.

We will ensure throughout this work that vulnerable people are offered choice and a maximum degree of independence in the way they live their lives.

We will also ensure that all aspects of work related to this strategy are consistent with the Corporation's equality and diversity policy and strategy.

Vulnerable people

The Housing Corporation takes a broad view of vulnerability and recognises that vulnerability is not necessarily permanent. We include those people requiring additional care and support services both in general needs and specialist housing and regardless of age. Older people may be vulnerable and this strategy for vulnerable people links with our policy and strategy on housing for older people.

Groups which we consider that fall under the heading 'vulnerable people' may include, but are not limited to:

- homeless families with support needs;
- offenders and people at risk of offending;
- older people with support needs;
- people with alcohol problems;
- people with drug problems;
- people with HIV or AIDS;
- people with learning disabilities;
- people with mental health problems;
- people with physical or sensory disabilities;
- refugees;
- rough sleepers;
- single homeless people with support needs;
- teenage parents;
- women at risk of domestic violence;
- young people at risk; and
- young people leaving care.

It is important to recognise that whilst these categories may represent one main presenting need, many vulnerable people will have multiple needs and may fall under a number of categories. These needs can be met in a variety of settings, such as shared specialist supported housing, hostels, women's refuges, residential care homes, extra care and through floating support in general needs housing.

Delivering the strategy

We will work to ensure the development and provision of high quality buildings and services that meet the needs of vulnerable people, in line with government policy objectives.

In particular we will:

Strategy	Action
Quality and design Invest in schemes that provide quality and control to vulnerable people as they seek to live independently, maintain their tenancies and enjoy a good quality of life.	<p>We will disseminate the findings and good practice from existing Innovation and Good Practice (IGP) projects and encourage future IGP proposals that benefit vulnerable people.</p> <p>We will publish a design guide for supported housing.</p>
Communities and local control Respond to and support the local authority's role to identify demand and offer choice to vulnerable people.	<p>For the 2008-11 National Affordable Housing Programme (NAHP), we will only invest in schemes which meet needs identified in relevant strategies, including local authority and regional Supporting People strategies and health strategies.</p> <p>We will work with local authorities and regional bodies to promote the identification and expression of needs and priorities for housing for vulnerable people in appropriate strategies, for example in Local Area Agreements.</p> <p>Jointly with Communities and Local Government, we will develop good practice guidance for regional bodies on the inclusion of housing care and support needs in regional housing strategies.</p>

Strategy	Action
<p>Mixed and sustainable communities Encourage the provision of support services to people living in general needs housing and therefore promoting independence, social inclusion and preventing homelessness.</p>	<p>As part of our bidding guidance for the NAHP 2008-11 we will ask providers to ensure where appropriate that the needs of vulnerable people are met in general needs housing.</p> <p>As part of our strategy on Tackling Homelessness we have committed to working with associations to promote tenancy sustainment measures and support vulnerable people.</p> <p>We will carry out a regulatory thematic review to assess how well housing associations meet the needs of vulnerable people within their general needs stock.</p>
<p>Independence, choice and control Support and promote measures that empower people to exercise choice and control including, where relevant, the purchase of their own support and care services.</p>	<p>We will work with government to further the objectives of Our Health, Our Care, Our Say, Improving Life Chances of Disabled People and the Supporting People Strategy, including the use of Individual Budgets.</p>
<p>Move-on Support and promote measures that assist vulnerable people securing appropriate move-on accommodation from supported housing.</p>	<p>We will promote move-on as part of our NAHP Prospectus 2008-11; and expect bidders for new supported housing to develop a strategic approach to move-on.</p> <p>We will promote the value and need for investment in one-bedroom general needs properties as move-on accommodation from supported housing.</p> <p>We will continue our work identified in our tackling homelessness strategy to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promote the expectation that housing associations include move-on in lettings and allocations plans, including in choice-based lettings (CBL) schemes; • carry out research to understand barriers faced by vulnerable people accessing CBL schemes; and • promote use of the private rented sector in widening the options for move-on.

We will ensure a close fit between our capital funding programmes, CLG's Supporting People programme, and other funding programmes.

In particular we will:

Strategy	Action
<p>Meeting housing needs Ensure that our investment programme can be readily accessed by schemes that meet agreed funding criteria.</p>	<p>In 2006-08, our funding of supported housing and housing for older people amounted to 10% of our NAHP. Subject to receiving suitable bids with regional and local prioritisation and support, we are keen to see this proportion maintained in future programmes.</p> <p>In autumn 2007 we will publish our NAHP 2008-11 prospectus and bidding guidance.</p> <p>We will ensure that the bidding requirements for partners and specialist bidders are clear and proportionate.</p> <p>Bidding for supported housing schemes is encouraged from both RSLs and non-RSLs within the prospectus.</p> <p>We will continue to explore ways to encourage non-RSLs to bid for the provision of housing for vulnerable people for the 2008-11 NAHP.</p>
<p>Innovative funding solutions Promote joint funding with other capital programmes seeking to provide housing solutions to vulnerable people.</p>	<p>Within our NAHP 2008-11 prospectus and bidding documents we will promote and publish guidance regarding potential joint and individual capital funding opportunities for supported housing schemes. Availability of funds will be subject to the outcome of the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007.</p>

Strategy	Action
<p>Capital and revenue</p> <p>Explore ways to align the revenue and capital funding streams better for housing for vulnerable people.</p>	<p>We will work with the Supporting People team at CLG to produce a joint statement on the links between revenue and capital funding regimes.</p> <p>We will develop and pioneer a pilot capital/revenue protocol between the Housing Corporation and a local authority.</p>
<p>Disability equality</p> <p>Seek to simplify arrangements for providing adaptations that can help a tenant remain in their own home.</p>	<p>We will work to implement the outcome of the Government's review of the Disabled Facilities Grant system.</p> <p>We will take account of, and work with the Government to implement, the outcome of its Independent Living Review for disabled people.</p> <p>We will promote the Corporation's expectations of housing associations under our disability duties.</p> <p>We will encourage best practice and co-operation between housing associations, local authorities and other agencies.</p>
<p>Planning</p> <p>Explore how planning, Section 106 and growth areas can better serve the needs of vulnerable people.</p>	<p>We will work with CLG and others to promote the needs of vulnerable people in current and planned communities.</p>

We will help housing associations and other providers identify and effectively manage the risks they may face in relation to the provision of housing for vulnerable people.

In particular we will:

Strategy	Action
<p>Targeted regulation Ensure that those associations that have built up considerable expertise and skills in managing specialist housing will be rewarded with less intrusive regulation.</p>	<p>Our Regulation teams are continuously assessing funding and performance data to identify those associations most at risk of failing to meet the requirements of our Regulatory Code.</p>
<p>Risk management Signpost best practice responses to the management of risk within the provision of housing with support and care services.</p>	<p>We will revise and republish our risk management toolkit for housing associations involved in housing with care and support.</p> <p>We will work with CLG and its Supporting People Value Improvement Programme to promote understanding of the risk impacts of commissioning decisions on RSL stock and our capital programme.</p>
<p>Minimise regulatory overlap Identify and reduce areas of duplication in the regulatory framework within which providers work.</p>	<p>We will continue to act upon and implement the findings of the Elton Review of RSL regulation.</p> <p>We will develop and publish a Memorandum of Understanding with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI).</p>

We will continue to influence the development of housing policy and programmes for vulnerable people.

In particular we will:

Strategy	Action
<p>Best practice Commission and disseminate knowledge and expertise about the best practice in housing for vulnerable people.</p>	<p>We will identify existing best practice and work with partners to commission the development of innovative practice (see also Quality and Design, above).</p> <p>We will implement our Equalities Impact Assessment of this strategy.</p>
<p>Analysis and evidence Use our market intelligence to inform policy makers of ways to improve outcomes for vulnerable people, and help model the likely impact of changes to policies and programmes.</p>	<p>We will continue to analyse our data sources and evidence to underpin policy and delivery of housing for vulnerable people.</p>
<p>Influencing Provide advice to government and others about the development and implementation of programmes that involve housing, care and support and vulnerable people.</p>	<p>We will work with government to further the aims of key strategies such as Supporting People and Valuing People.</p>

We will work with a wide variety of organisations and experts.

In particular we will:

Strategy	Action
Understanding the sector Maintain our understanding of the operational context for housing associations and other providers of support and Supporting People authorities.	Our Field Regulation and Investment teams will keep in close contact with providers and we will ensure that the knowledge they acquire informs our policy making and advice to government.
Informed by the sector Be informed by a wide network of contacts within Whitehall and at regional level, with providers and with clients and service users.	We will continue to utilise our expert Vulnerable People Board Advisory Group to guide us.

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