

# **KEY POLICY: SERVICE DELIVERY**

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**Date: March 2008**

**Review: May 2011**

## **VULNERABLE AND SPECIAL NEEDS**

### **1.0 Policy Statement**

South Lakes Housing (SLH) aims to provide the highest possible standard of service either directly or indirectly (via other housing and/or support and care organisations) to meet the wide range of housing support and care needs in the communities in which it works.

### **2.0 Key Strategic Link**

#### **Cumbria Housing Strategy 2006 - 2011**

The Cumbrian authorities and their partners have traditionally worked in collaboration to develop housing services within the County. With a stronger regional framework we need to strengthen the sub-regional identity of Cumbria within that framework.

All of Cumbria's stakeholders agreed that by working together they would be able to improve the planning, implementation and delivery of all housing services within the sub-region. Particular emphasis is on the way our housing and planning services can improve the ability of Cumbria's housing markets to respond to social and community needs.

To deliver sustainable communities our sub-regional fit-for-purpose housing strategy will be integrated with complementary planning and economic development strategies.

#### **Shadow Cumbria supporting People Strategy**

##### **Vision Statement**

Supporting the well-being of Cumbria's people and communities by: -

- Supporting people to be INDEPENDENT;
- Supporting people to be PART OF THEIR COMMUNITY;
- Supporting people to have a real CHOICE about the service they need.

The key priorities are: -

- Promoting well-being and reducing health inequalities;
- Reducing homelessness;
- Improving the range of accommodation and services;
- Reduction of crime and offending;
- Partnership working
- Best Value;
- Quality and choice.

### 3.0 Key Policy standards

#### Values

SLH believes that all tenants have the right to live independently within a SLH property whatever their level of care or support needs, provided that the required levels of support can be realistically and safely achieved. SLH will not directly provide care services but will assist tenants to access such services as they require.

Where SLH is unable to provide support services directly it will ensure that tenants have access to appropriate service by forming and nurturing constructive partnerships with other agencies and organisations.

SLH believes that partnership working is essential to allow its tenants access to the full range of care and support services that they may need. Where appropriate SLH will work with specialist providers of supported housing to ensure that the needs of people, desiring to live independently but for whom a standard property would not be suitable, are adequately catered for.

SLH will ensure that suitable equipment and facilities are provided in its main offices and sheltered housing schemes to allow them to be effectively accessed by customers or staff with disabilities.

Services to customers who are vulnerable or have special needs will be delivered within the relevant legal frameworks that underpin SLH's activities. Policies, procedures and information will be updated in response to legislative change.

All employees have a responsibility for ensuring that services are tailored appropriately to meet the needs of customers. SLH will ensure that all staff are aware of these values and receive up-to-date training, including disability awareness training, to support this requirement.

SLH will ensure that contractors and tenant representatives are aware of SLH's commitments to its vulnerable customers and provide awareness raising training where appropriate.

SLH will strive to understand vulnerable tenants and the special needs of its tenants to ensure that services can be tailored appropriately. SLH staff will:

- Carry out a pre-tenancy support plan for all potential sheltered housing tenants;
- Undertake a risk assessment of potential tenants prior to tenancy commencement;
- Issue all waiting list applicants with a vulnerable person self-assessment form prior to housing them. This will enable SLH to identify anyone who is vulnerable;
- Where a vulnerable person with special needs is identified put into place a suitable support plan and make referrals to appropriate agency.

SLH will work with South Lakeland District Council to assess the demand for housing from people with special needs and strive to adapt housing to meet such demand.

### Vulnerable and Special Needs

SLH recognises that the demand for social housing from households which could be defined as including a person with special needs for care and/or support is considerable.

SLH views the following list of people as those who may fall into this definition: -

- people with physical or sensory disability;
- people with degenerative or debilitating illness, including HIV/AIDS;
- people with learning difficulties;
- people with mental health issues;
- people with alcohol or substance misuse issues;
- people leaving penal establishments, referred to the Association by the Probation service, or at risk of offending;
- refugees and asylum seekers;
- people who do not speak English as a main language;
- women experiencing, or at risk of, domestic violence;
- older people;
- young people, at risk, or leaving care;
- teenage mothers or pregnant teenagers;
- homeless people;
- any other person classed as vulnerable after a Social Services assessment or SLH vulnerable person self assessment and risk assessment.

SLH believes the list is neither exhaustive nor implies that people who fit a particular category necessarily are vulnerable with special needs for housing or require additional care or support. For example, a person with a physical disability will often not require additional housing support if they are housed in an appropriately designed or adapted property.

The majority of the customers with special needs to whom SLH provides services, are older people. The service promises detailed below include specific reference to these groups of people.

## Service Promises

Services will be developed or adapted as appropriate but the minimum provision applicable to customers with special needs is set out below:

### Offices

The main office and the offices within sheltered housing schemes will be accessible to all customers including wheelchair users. An induction loop facility will be available in the reception area, tenants resource centre, interview rooms, and in the communal lounges of the sheltered housing schemes.

A minicom facility will be available at the main office.

Access to appropriate staff and additional services, for example, interpretation and translating services will be available as set out in SLH's separate Customer Care policy.

### Properties

SLH will set an annual budget to fund adaptations to SLH properties to meet the needs of tenants with disabilities or illness.

SLH will also work closely with housing authority and Social Services partners to: -

- strive to ensure the availability of sufficient funding to meet the demand for aids and adaptations;
- develop effective, equitable and transparent mechanisms to determine priorities for adaptations.

SLH will restrict lettings to some properties to ensure the availability of housing for certain groups. The separate Lettings policy will detail the criteria of such restricted lettings.

SLH will, where appropriate, let an individual property on the basis of individual need, rather than the normal criteria for property size or type set out in the Lettings policy. For example, a house may be let to a single person to allow room to store medical equipment or to allow carers to live in or visit.

### Intensive Housing Management Services

All housing management services will be tailored to meet the needs of individual tenants with special needs.

Constructive partnerships and working arrangements will be developed with appropriate agencies to supplement the intensive housing management service SLH can provide. SLH will work closely with agencies such as Social Services, the Police, as required, to supplement its own services.

### Partnership Working

SLH will form and nurture a constructive working partnership with any agency that can assist with ensuring that appropriate care and support services are provided to all customers with special needs to enable them to sustain their tenancies.

In particular SLH will link with: -

- South Lakeland District Council;
- Morecambe Bay Primary care Trust;
- Citizens Advice Bureau;
- Shelter Cumbria;
- Resolve Mediation;
- Other voluntary sector agencies;
- Other statutory agencies;
- Specialist housing and care providers;
- Private home care agencies.

Where appropriate, SLH will encourage its partners to base their staff within SLH's properties where this would be of general benefit to tenants or would allow a specific service to be provided.

### Support Services

Support services to tenants with special needs can either be residentially based or delivered through 'floating support'. Floating support may be either on-going or delivered on an occasional basis by: -

#### Impact Floating Support

- Provide tenancy support to males or females aged 16 years or over.
- Provide support to enable tenants to maintain their tenancy by helping manage their finances and make benefit claims.
- They also provide emotional support and help clients to develop social skills and behaviour management.

#### Stonham South Lakeland Floating Support Service

- Provide tenancy support to males or females aged 16 years or over.
- Help tenants set up home i.e. connection to gas, electricity and water.
- Help clients to claim benefits and budgeting advice.

- Liaise with other organisations on behalf of a tenant.

#### Age Concern

- Give benefits and financial advice
- Help with housing and property issues
- Help with most things that affect quality of life

Support services may be delivered directly by SLH. However, SLH will also work in partnership with specialised housing providers or other agencies equipped to provide support to ensure that the needs of its tenants can be met, they include;-

- Carr Gomm
- Stonham Housing Association
- Impact Housing Association
- Fair Oaks Housing Association
- The Oakleigh Trust

Where appropriate SLH will lease properties to other agencies or housing providers, to meet identifiable demand for specialist housing provision from special needs groups. SLH will work in partnership with housing authorities and supporting people teams to strive to ensure the adequacy of funding for such support services.

SLH will retain a register of those referred to other agencies, and monitor the effective delivery of support services provided by others, for example, to tenants receiving floating support in its sheltered housing.

#### Homelessness

SLH will work with South Lakeland District Council to assist the Council to discharge its statutory duties to homeless households.

SLDC have a Homeless Prevention Officer, whose role is to work with people who are in housing crisis and are in fear of losing their home.

#### Older Persons' Services

SLH acknowledges that a significant proportion of tenants will be aged 60 years or over. SLH will, therefore, provide specialist services for older people.

Although older people can be housed in any of SLH's properties it will provide housing specifically designated as older persons' accommodation, in line with the Lettings policy. This provision will either be in the form of sheltered housing schemes or of individual or grouped dwellings dispersed throughout the area.

Each designated dispersed property can be equipped with a Careline community alarm. This facility will connect the tenant to a Control centre, staffed 24-hours a day, enabling appropriate advice or support to be given or assistance summoned.

SLH will ensure that the Control Centre offers the highest quality of service and employs trained staff equipped to deal with all enquiries or emergencies.

SLH will engage appropriate contractors to maintain the Careline alarm equipment and will visit each property with an alarm fitted a minimum of once a year to service and test the equipment.

#### **4.0 Dealing with Abuse of Vulnerable Tenants**

Abuse is a violation of an individual's human and civil rights by another person or persons.

It may be:

- Physical
- Psychological
- Sexual
- Financial
- Neglect/Omission
- Discriminatory

**Decisions by staff regarding whether or not to report concerns of abuse of vulnerability are not a matter of individual conscience; they are a professional duty.**

If any member of the Housing Management Team believes that a tenant has been subject to abuse or are vulnerable they should:

- Call a case conference with relevant agencies i.e. Police, Social Services, Senior Housing Officer etc.
- Report the case to the Housing Manager;
- Keep detailed notes on the house file.

#### **Allegations made against staff**

If a Manager becomes aware that a member of staff is abusing or is suspected of abusing or mistreating a tenant they must immediately:

- Ensure that the tenant is safe and protected from further abuse;
- Contact our Human Resources Department to report a possible

breach, which will require investigation under SLH's Disciplinary Policy:

- Report the matter to Director of Operations using the incident form.

#### Informing outside agencies

If it appears that an offence has been committed SLH will report the matter to the local Child and Adult Protection Unit (CAPU) of Cumbria Police.

In all other cases, the position varies due to the nature of the accommodation of the vulnerable person: In all schemes with Supporting People funding:

- SLH will notify Ian Rundle, Adult Protection Coordinator, Adult Social Care 01539 773398, about our concerns and advise what action we have taken to protect service users. If it appears that more information is required, Adult Social Care will co ordinate an enquiry initially by calling an Inter Agency Consultation Meeting.
- In all other circumstances SLH will notify the local office of Adult Social Care Services about our concerns and advise what action we have taken to protect service users. If it appears that more information is required the Team Manager of Adult Social Care Services will coordinate the enquiry initially by calling an Inter Agency Consultation Meeting.

The responsibility for calling the external agencies lies either with Director of Operations, or the relevant member of the Management Team.

SLH will investigate the matter under our Disciplinary Procedure provided that this does not interfere with any criminal investigation or Adult Protection/Supporting People investigation. The timing of the Disciplinary Process will be agreed with the Inter Agency Consultation Meeting or with relevant staff from Adult Social Care, Supporting People or Cumbria Police.

Once we suspend the person we are required under the Care Standards Act 2000 Section 82 to submit the name of the employee to the Department of Health for provisional listing on the Protection of Vulnerable Adults List.

Any further sanctions against the employee are SLH's responsibility. However as part of the discussion surrounding the ongoing protection of the vulnerable person Adult Social Care or the Inter agency Case Conference should consider what steps we might take. This will include:

- Dismissal and referral to the Protection of Vulnerable Adults List (POVA) see para.5.2 below
- Verbal or written warning
- Training
- Change to work patterns
- Increased supervision

## Protection of Vulnerable Adults List (POVA)

The list of people considered unsuitable to work with vulnerable adults is known as the Protection of Vulnerable Adults list. South Lakes Housing will always pass on details of staff to POVA if we feel that they are unsuitable to work with vulnerable people. The Care Standards Act 2000 Sections 81 – 82 set out the relevant legislative details.

### **5.0 Key Targets and Performance Indicators**

- Numbers by category of vulnerable people on Housing Register and periodic comparison.
- Benchmarking, with particular regard to best practice.

### **6.0 Monitoring, Review and Consultation Process**

Regular reports will be made to the Board detailing South Lakes Housing's position with regard to the agreed key targets and performance indicators.

Annual reports to tenants and regular reports to Tenants' Committee.

There will be regular review of policy in this important cross-functional service.

There will be regular consultation and joint planning meetings with representative tenant groups and/or other stakeholders such as Social Services, the Health Authority and the voluntary sector.

### **7.0. Service Development and Comprehensive Service Review Priority**

SLH will review the effectiveness of this policy on a regular basis to ensure continuous improvement.

Policy Review Priority: High at least every three years.

### **8.0 Equality and Diversity**

South Lakes Housing recognises that there is a broad range of visible and non-visible differences that characterise its tenants. Some of these qualities include race, religion, culture, nationality, ethnic background, colour, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, literacy and income level. By understanding and respecting this diversity it is able to set a policy which ensures that all tenants are able to access services provided by South Lakes Housing in an equitable manner.

South Lakes Housing is committed to providing information and services equally and without discrimination so that they meet the needs of all sections of the community. These include our tenants, leaseholders and those living nearby or seeking access to or information on housing services in the South Lakeland area. In carrying out all housing management policies, South Lakes Housing's Equality and Diversity Policy will be adhered to.