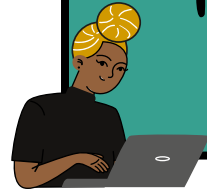


An interactive guide to the Spotlight Report on Attitudes, Respect & Rights.

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(Vol. 3 as at May 2024)



BACKGROUND

The Spotlight report, Attitudes, respect and rights. Relationship of equals was published by the Housing Ombudsman Service (HOS) in January 2024.

The HOS provides impartial resolution services for disputes involving UK social housing tenants and leaseholders as well as learning resources for the sector. Spotlight reports focus on thematic issues identified through casework, offering in-depth analysis and recommendations for areas showing frequent service failures.

This report addresses the treatment of vulnerable residents, highlighting systemic shortcomings exacerbated by economic pressures and advocating for fair and reasonable services as a basic human right.

It underscores the importance of having up-to-date information about our residents, acknowledges the link between health and housing, and encourages social landlords to collaborate with health, social care, and police services to support residents' comprehensive needs effectively.

THE FINDINGS

The report highlights critical issues in social housing, notably in communication, disability accommodations, and tenant support:

Communication: Residents report poor communication from landlords, except on updates beyond rent and service charges.

Disability and Adjustments: Most residents with disabilities state that landlords do not make necessary adjustments, despite clear requests.

Digital Exclusion: Digital exclusion & its impact on residents' access to information and services online. Some residents need more face-2-face contact.

Contact Arrangements: Difficulties in contacting landlords persist, often requiring intervention from advocacy services.

Staff Behaviour and Conduct: Staff misconduct, bias, discrimination and negative attitudes lead to poor relationships and ineffective complaint resolution.

People & Processes: A lack of attention to vulnerabilities and poor processes & record-keeping contribute to resident difficulties and distrust.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CULTURE AND VALUES

Review and Reflect: Reassess mission statements and service approaches to ensure they are resident-focused and address vulnerabilities effectively.

RESIDENT NEEDS

Policy Review and Strategy Implementation: Review and actively implement **vulnerability policies**.

Develop and test a **reasonable adjustments policy** to ensure it aligns with legal standards and addresses the '3Rs' of **recognising, responding, and recording vulnerabilities**.

Training and Taskforce: Mandate comprehensive staff training on issues like dementia, mental health, and disabilities. Consider forming a dedicated taskforce focused on vulnerability.

FUTURE PLANNING

Forecasting and Planning: Conduct a "**Resident of the Future**" forecast to identify demographic changes and anticipate future needs.

COMPLAINT HANDLING

Accessibility and Awareness: Increase accessibility of the **complaint process** and ensure policies are inclusive of issues like staff conduct and bullying.

Establish Clear Procedures: Including recording calls and setting timelines for reviews of vulnerability flags and appeals.

OPERATIONAL LANDSCAPE

The operational landscape for registered providers in social housing is increasingly complex, influenced by several critical factors:

Supply & Demand: A significant shortage of social housing persists, with demand far outstripping the reduced supply, leaving over 1.21 million households on waiting lists.

Demographics: The social housing population is aging, with a notable increase in older residents who may require adapted services.

Vulnerable Groups: Many residents with disabilities or long-term illnesses are inappropriately housed in general needs properties, lacking necessary adaptations.

Digital Exclusion: About 700,000 social housing households lack internet access, impacting their ability to communicate and access services.

Mental Health: Poor housing conditions are closely linked to deteriorating mental health among residents.

VULNERABILITY

The term "vulnerable" in social housing is complex and varies by context, often misinterpreted as merely indicating weakness. The legal definition, focusing on adults who cannot protect themselves due to care needs, does not cover all scenarios, such as those with long-term illnesses not considered statutorily vulnerable.

The Housing Ombudsman Service defines vulnerability more broadly as "**a dynamic state influenced by a resident's personal circumstances, characteristics, and specific housing complaints.**"

This vulnerability can worsen if not managed with care by landlords but can be mitigated with appropriate and effective adjustments.

REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The term "reasonable adjustments" refers to modifications made by landlords to mitigate disadvantages faced by individuals with protected characteristics or vulnerabilities.

These adjustments can be temporary or long-term and should be periodically reviewed. Landlords have a proactive, anticipatory duty to foresee and address potential needs.

The reasonableness of an adjustment is evaluated based on its effectiveness, feasibility, and cost relative to the landlord's resources. Once deemed reasonable, adjustments must be implemented, regardless of funding concerns.

READING LIST

Equality Act 2010

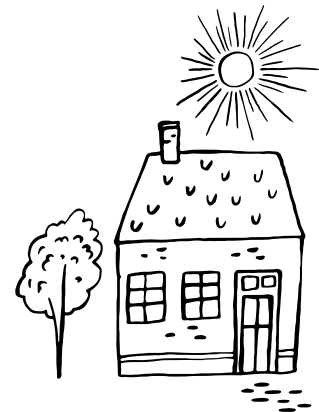
Landlord & Tenant Act 1985

Spotlight on Attitudes,

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Spotlight on Knowledge and

Information Management



GENERAL NEEDS HOUSING

General needs housing, which comprises 88.5% of social housing, is defined as not specifically designated for certain groups.

However, many residents in these units have significant needs, such as disabilities, long-term illnesses, or are aging.

According to the English Housing Survey 2021-22, 54% of social rented households have at least one household member with a long-term illness or disability.

43% of new lettings in general needs housing includes individuals with these conditions, highlighting that "**general needs**" does not mean a lack of needs.

SUPPORTED HOUSING

Supported housing is meant to aid diverse groups including older individuals, people with disabilities, those recovering from addiction, and victims of domestic abuse, by providing accommodation with support, supervision or care to help them live independently.

Despite 27% of lettings being for supported housing, the sector faces a severe lack of investment and neglect from landlords. This has led to a supply shortage and deteriorating service quality.

Issues include inadequate understanding of resident needs and insufficient engagement, with reports of disrespect and exclusion from decision-making processes.