

Main updates to the Vulnerable Adults Housing Policy 2026

Policy section	Draft update
1. Aims of the policy	General updates to this section, for example, updated housing stock and tenant profile figures.
2. Strategic context	New section to set out regulatory requirements on the Council as a social housing landlord and links to other documents, such as the Corporate Plan, strategies and associated policies.
3. Defining vulnerability	Paragraph 3.1: The definition of ‘vulnerability’ has been updated from: ‘Anyone aged 18 or above of aged 16/17 with a guarantor; who may be in need of community care services or an enhanced housing service’. To: ‘A dynamic state which arises from someone’s personal circumstances, protected characteristics and/or lived experiences that may mean they are unable, either temporarily or permanently, to independently manage without additional support’. Paragraph 3.4: In the list of possible reasons for vulnerability; being a member of the Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community, previously being a member of the Armed Forces, or a person seeking asylum, has been added to the list. Paragraph 3.7: In this list of signs that someone may be vulnerable; a change in a person’s behaviour or interactions with others and not reporting repairs or otherwise not making contact with the Housing Service, has been added to the list.
4. How vulnerability is identified and recorded	Paragraph 4.2: In the list of ways that vulnerability can be identified; use of vulnerability risk assessments for anti-social behaviour cases or tenancy management issues, Tenant Round Up (TRU) tenancy audit visits and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion information collection drives, visits to inspect housing conditions in the private sector, through the local Home Improvement Agency, Hospital Discharge Team, Fire Service, Police and Duty to Refer, has been added to the list. Paragraph 4.3: Updated how vulnerability is recorded to explain that a record of known vulnerability will be made to ensure staff have knowledge of any additional factors to consider when delivering services.

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5. How vulnerable adults are supported	Paragraph 5.2.1: In the list of ways that the Housing Service communicates with its service users; email, texts, social media (WhatsApp and Facebook), annual reports, and consultations, has been added to the list. Paragraph 5.5: New paragraph explaining that the Council understands that victims and survivors of domestic abuse may be particularly vulnerable and need additional support from the Housing Service to access safe housing. The Council's Domestic Abuse Housing Policy ensures that the Council has processes in place to support those affected by domestic abuse, is sensitive to the needs of the individual's circumstances and is victim and survivor focused, as well as ensuring a trauma informed approach is taken. Support offered can range from referrals to the Sanctuary Access for Eligible Residents (SAFER) Scheme, the Council's own Sanctuary Scheme, management transfers and referrals for specialist support. Paragraph 5.8: The services and safeguards for vulnerable adults in place from each Housing Service team have been updated, as follows: <u>Housing Solutions:</u> • Updated that auto bidding allows bids to be placed automatically for housing applicants based on their predetermined preferences and needs. • Removed reference to the Housing Hub service as this service has ceased. • Moved reference to the team investigating cases in the private sector of alleged harassment and illegal eviction to the Private Sector Housing Team section. <u>Tenancy Services:</u> • Updated that Tenant Round Up (TRU) visits to every tenant are carried out once a year to ensure data on the diverse needs and support needs of tenants are kept up to date. • Updated that the Case Management Panel is a monthly meeting which includes the Tenancy Services Manager, all Senior Housing Officers, Housing Officers, Anti-Social Behaviour Team, Allocations Team, Compliance Officer, Adult Social Care and Legal Services. The purpose of the panel is to discuss the most vulnerable tenants. It is a round the table discussion where information is shared and future action plans are discussed using the knowledge and experience of all attendees.

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- Updated that the Duty to Refer process will be used where a Council tenant may be at risk of losing their tenancy so that the Housing Solutions Team can intervene earlier to provide advice and assistance about housing options before the tenancy ends.
- Updated that third party authority will be taken, which allows a vulnerable tenant to authorise the Council to speak to a family member, friend, or professional on matters in relation to their tenancy.
- Updated that a drop-in service is in place for residents to attend the second Monday of each month if they require assistance with mutual exchange. They may require help to register, seek an exchange or understand the process.
- Updated that assistance is provided to tenants who lack the skills and confidence to access services digitally, such as through digital inclusion sessions and assistance with online forms.
- Updated that support is provided to tenants who demonstrate hoarding behaviours. As well as addressing safety risks, tenants are supported to overcome their hoarding behaviour to enable tenancy sustainment.
- Updated that all anti-social behaviour cases are risk assessed to identify vulnerable individuals and to protect individuals from harm. Assessments are designed to understand the risk factors and impact of the anti-social behaviour on the individual. The assessment assists to make informed decisions about appropriate and proportionate interventions, support, and protection.
- Updated that assistance is provided to tenants to maximise their income by completing an income and expenditure form and benefit calculator. Assistance is also provided with benefit applications including Universal Credit.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance:

- Updated that every six months, contact will be made with tenants who have not reported a repair in the last two years to check on welfare as well as any repairs issues.
- Updated that vulnerable tenants are at increased risk of damp and mould related health issues. The team takes a proactive approach to resolving issues with damp and mould and complies with Awaab's Law to fix issues to timescales. Where vulnerable tenants may need assistance to complete a mould wash in their home, the team will instruct its contractor to complete the mould wash for them.
- Updated that where vulnerable tenants are identified through the stock condition survey programme, works are completed to support the tenants.

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	• Updated that where access is required to complete health and safety compliance works, the team will look to identify tenants that are vulnerable and provide additional support, including working with Housing Officers and partnering agencies. • Updated that as vulnerable tenants may be at increased risk of fire, for example due to hoarding, smoke alarms are tested to ensure they are working and any defects raised as part of the annual gas service checks. • Removed reference to identifying vulnerable residents who may need support and information during estate inspections as the Housing Repairs and Maintenance Team do not carry out the estate inspection function. <u>Private Sector Housing:</u> • Updated that the team investigates cases in the private sector of alleged harassment and illegal eviction. • Removed reference to the Housing Health & Housing Coordinator at Darent Valley Hospital aims to aid in patient discharge as this service has ended. • Removed reference to the team working with a Home Straight Coordinator who offers assistance to address clutter or hoarding as this service has ended. • Removed reference to assisting with registering for the 'Energy Deal' and promoting the Priority Service Register as this is now carried out by the Climate Change Team.
6. Complaints	Paragraph 6.2: New paragraph explaining that the Housing Ombudsman or the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman can be contacted if further advice and support is needed on making a complaint.
7. Data protection	No changes
8. Equality and diversity	No changes
9. Review	No changes