

Draft Vulnerable Adults Housing Policy

The Vulnerable Adults Housing Policy sets out Dartford Borough Council's approach to identifying and supporting vulnerable adults who use the Housing Service.

2026

Contents

No.	Section	Page
1	<u>AIM OF THE POLICY</u>	4
2	<u>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</u>	4
3	<u>DEFINING VULNERABILITY</u>	5
4	<u>HOW VULNERABLE ADULTS ARE IDENTIFIED</u>	7
5	<u>HOW VULNERABLE ADULTS ARE SUPPORTED</u>	7
6	<u>COMPLAINTS</u>	15
7	<u>DATA PROTECTION</u>	15
8	<u>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY</u>	15
9	<u>REVIEW</u>	15

If you need information in another format (such as Braille, audio, large print or written translation), or you need an interpreter, or require support for hearing difficulties, please contact Dartford Borough Council on 01322 343434.

Dacă aveți nevoie de informații într-un alt format (cum ar fi Braille, audio, caractere mari sau traducere scrisă), dacă aveți nevoie de un interpret sau dacă aveți nevoie de asistență pentru dificultăți de auz, vă rugăm să contactați Consiliul Local Dartford la numărul de telefon 01322 343434.

Jeśli potrzebujesz informacji w innym formacie (np. w alfabecie Braille'a, w formacie audio, dużym druku lub w tłumaczeniu pisemnym) lub potrzebujesz tłumacza, bądź też pomocy w przypadku osób niedosłyszących, skontaktuj się z Radą Miejską Dartford pod numerem telefonu 01322 343434.

உங்களுக்கு வேறு வடிவத்தில் தகவல் தேவைப்பட்டால் (பிரெய்லி, ஆடியோ, பெரிய அச்ச அல்லது எழுத்து மொழிபெயர்ப்பு போன்றவை), அல்லது உங்களுக்கு ஒரு மொழிபெயர்ப்பாளர் தேவைப்பட்டால், அல்லது கேட்கும் சிரமங்களுக்கு ஆதரவு தேவைப்பட்டால், தயவுசெய்து டார்ட்ஃபோர்ட் பெருநகர கவுன்சிலை 01322 343434 என்ற எண்ணில் தொடர்பு கொள்ளவும்.

ਜੇ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਫਾਰਮੈਟ ਵਿੱਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ ਹੈ (ਜਿਵੇਂ ਕਿ ਬਰੇਲ, ਆਡੀਓ, ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ ਵਿੱਚ ਜਾਂ ਲਿਖਤੀ ਅਨੁਵਾਦ), ਜਾਂ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਦੁਆਰਾ ਦੀ ਲੋੜ ਹੈ, ਜਾਂ ਸਟਨ ਨਾਲ ਸੰਬੰਧਿਤ ਕਿਸੇ ਸਮਰਥਨ ਦੀ ਜ਼ਰੂਰਤ ਹੈ, ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਡਾਰਟਫੋਰਡ ਬਰੋ ਕੌਂਸਲ ਨਾਲ 01322 343434 'ਤੇ ਸੰਪਰਕ ਕਰੋ।

1. AIM OF THE POLICY

- 1.1. As a social housing landlord, Dartford Borough Council ('the Council') owns and manages 3,759 general needs properties, 427 housing scheme properties for people aged 55 and over, and 494 leasehold properties. The Council also has a duty to prevent homelessness and allocate social housing in the Borough. In addition, the Council seeks to improve the quality and suitability of homes in the private sector, from owner occupied homes to privately rented flats and houses in multiple occupancy.
- 1.2. The Council aims to ensure that everyone can access and benefit from its housing services but appreciates that vulnerable service users may need additional support and advice.
- 1.3. The objectives of this Policy are to set out:
 - How vulnerable adults and their support needs are identified by the Housing Service
 - How vulnerable adults are assisted to access the Housing Service
 - How the Housing Service meets the needs of vulnerable adults and provides support
 - The safeguards which are in place to protect vulnerable adults from harm
 - How the Housing Service will signpost and refer vulnerable adults to other organisations, when they require additional and/or specialist support.

2. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 2.1. This policy and its delivery is intended to be compatible with the Regulator of Social Housing's [Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard](#) which requires the Council, as a social housing landlord, to treat all tenants with fairness and respect and take action to deliver fair and equitable outcomes for tenants and, where relevant, prospective tenants. This means the Council must:
 - a) use relevant information and data to understand the diverse needs of tenants, including those arising from protected characteristics, language barriers, and additional support needs; and assess whether fair and equitable outcomes are delivered for tenants.
 - b) ensure that communication with and information for tenants is clear, accessible, relevant, timely and appropriate for the diverse needs of tenants.
 - c) ensure that landlord services are accessible, and that the accessibility is publicised to tenants. This includes supporting tenants and prospective tenants to use online landlord services if required.
 - d) allow tenants and prospective tenants to be supported by a representative or advocate in interactions about landlord services.
- 2.2. In addition, the Regulator's [Tenancy Standard](#) requires the Council to provide services that support tenants to maintain their tenancy or licence and prevent unnecessary evictions.

2.3. This policy and its delivery is intended to be compatible with the following Council policies and documents:

- [Corporate Plan](#) – sets out the strategic direction the Council will take in relation to its powers, functions and responsibilities. The plan includes a core value to provide accessible services for all.
- [Care Leavers Policy](#) – sets out the Council's commitment to support young people transitioning from care to independence.
- [Safeguarding Policy](#) – sets out the procedures that will be followed to protect adults at risk and children from abuse or neglect.
- [Equality and Diversity Framework](#) – sets out how the Council will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.
- [Housing Strategy 2025-2028](#) – sets out the Council's Housing Service commitment to provide genuinely affordable homes for our residents and communities in Dartford and ensure that our homes in the borough are safe, secure places to live.
- [Homelessness and Rough Sleeping Strategy 2024-2029](#) – sets out how the Council will prioritise the prevention of homelessness and ending of rough sleeping in the borough.
- [Domestic Abuse Housing Strategy 2024-2027](#) – sets out a plan and policy statement for how the Council's Housing Service will assist and support victims and survivors of domestic abuse.
- [Housing Service policies](#) – set out how the Council delivers housing services and what customers can expect.

3. DEFINING VULNERABILITY

- 3.1. For the purpose of this policy, 'vulnerability' is defined as 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.
- 3.2. It should be noted that due to the separation of functions, individual teams within the Housing Service may use other definitions of vulnerability such as statutory definitions. For example, homelessness legislation has a definition of vulnerability which is used to determine whether or not a local authority is required to secure alternative accommodation for a vulnerable person who is in priority need.
- 3.3. This policy is not bound by legislation and because of this a general definition of 'vulnerability' has been adopted which will be used broadly across all service areas, for the purpose of identifying service users who may require tailored and additional support (such as extra home visits or assistance to fill out forms) or who require signposting to other services. The definition does not replace statutory definitions.
- 3.4. The Council recognises that someone can be vulnerable for a number of reasons, these may include:

- Mental health conditions
 - Learning disability or difficulty
 - Sensory impairment
 - Physical disability or illness
 - They are frail and elderly
 - They have alcohol or substance misuse issues
 - They are an ex-offender
 - They are experiencing domestic abuse or harassment
 - They are care leavers
 - They are seeking asylum
 - They are a member of the Gypsy, Roma or Traveller community
 - They were previously a member of the Armed Forces
 - English is not spoken, or spoken only as a second language
 - They lack capacity to make decisions for themselves (under the Mental Capacity Act 2005)
- 3.5. A person may be vulnerable as a result of a single issue or condition, or due to a combination of factors. Vulnerability can also occur at different points in a person's life, for instance someone may need support following bereavement for a temporary period, whereas another may require support permanently.
- 3.6. This policy does not assume that whole groups of people are vulnerable. For example, it is not correct to assume that all older people are vulnerable or that all disabled people are vulnerable.
- 3.7. There are a number of signs that someone may be vulnerable. These may include, but are not limited to the following:
- Concerns about an adult whose care and support needs are not being met
 - Erratic rent payments and falling into rent arrears or other debt problems
 - Issues with maintaining the tenancy
 - Being the victim, or perpetrator, of anti-social behaviour, hate crime or harassment
 - Disputes with neighbours
 - Damage to the person's home
 - A detrimental change to a person's physical appearance
 - A change in a person's behaviour or interaction with others
 - Not reporting repairs, or not granting access requests (e.g. for gas safety checks), or not responding to correspondence, or otherwise not making contact with the Housing Service
 - Self-neglect, hoarding or other behaviour which results in the person's home and/or garden becoming damaged, neglected or otherwise unfit for occupation
- 3.8. **Children with support needs** – the Council's [Safeguarding Policy](#) covers where intervention may be needed regarding children with support needs and explains the various support levels and types of intervention services available.

4. HOW VULNERABLE ADULTS ARE IDENTIFIED

- 4.1. When a service user contacts the Housing Service there is an opportunity to identify whether they are vulnerable. Because someone can become vulnerable at different stages of their lives, it is essential that identification of vulnerability is not just at the point of first contact but is picked up whenever contact is made.
- 4.2. Vulnerability can be identified by Officers in a number of ways, for example:
- Various application forms that include a vulnerability checklist, for example, for the housing register, homelessness service, disabled facility grants and private sector leasing scheme
 - Vulnerability risk assessments for anti-social behaviour cases or tenancy management issues
 - During the initial tenancy sign-up of a tenancy or during other home visits
 - Tenant Round Up (TRU) tenancy audit visits and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion information collection drives for Council tenants
 - Over the phone
 - Notification from relatives, neighbours or friends
 - During daily calls or weekly visits for Housing Scheme tenants
 - Housing support concern card. If a repairs or gas servicing contractor has concerns that a tenant may require some extra support or there are safeguarding concerns, they complete a 'concern card' and then return it to the Housing Officer. The Housing Officer then contacts the tenant to resolve any unmet need
 - Visits to inspect housing conditions in the private sector
 - Notifications from professionals, such as Occupational Therapists, the local Home Improvement Agency, Hospital Discharge Team, Fire Service, Care Managers, GPs, Police, or through the Duty to Refer
- 4.3. A record of any known vulnerability will be made to ensure staff have knowledge of any additional factors to consider when delivering services.

5. HOW VULNERABLE ADULTS ARE SUPPORTED

5.1. General signposting and referrals

- 5.1.1. When a member of staff identifies a vulnerable adult, they will seek to signpost or refer the person to appropriate external support if it is needed. Some of the services signposted or referred to may include for example:
- GPs and other health services
 - Mental health services
 - Adult Social Services (for care and support services or safeguarding)
 - Housing-related support (available to Housing Scheme tenants)
 - Occupational Health
 - Substance misuse services
 - Domestic abuse services
 - Debt advice and welfare benefit services
 - Advocacy services

5.1.2. It is also recognised that carers, who are caring for vulnerable people in a voluntary capacity (e.g. partner, relative or friend), may also need support in fulfilling their responsibilities and in looking after their own wellbeing. Carer's will be signposted, wherever appropriate, for carer's assessments and/or to other carer's support.

5.2. **Communication**

5.2.1. The Housing Service communicates with its service users in a variety of different ways:

- Face to face, which includes home visits and appointments at the Civic Centre
- Phone
- Email
- Letters
- Texts
- Website
- Social media (WhatsApp and Facebook)
- Through the Link (tenants' newsletter)
- Annual reports
- Consultations

5.2.2. In accordance with the Council's [Equality and Diversity Framework](#), documents are available in other languages, braille, large print and audio and all staff will provide assistance to complete forms when requested. Service users can also ask that correspondence is sent to someone who will act on their behalf. Telephone and face-to-face language interpreting and British Sign Language interpreting services can also be provided upon request. Calls can be received via Relay UK.

5.2.3. Service users are asked to convey any communication needs when they first approach the Housing Service (questions are posed in the vulnerability checklist) but also at other opportunities during the course of service delivery. This ensures that the Housing Service can communicate with the service user in the best way possible and in a way that is tailored to their individual needs.

5.3. **Mental capacity**

5.3.1. The Mental Capacity Act 2005 (the Act) provides the legal framework for acting and making decisions on behalf of people (aged 16 or over) who lack the mental capacity to make particular decisions for themselves.

5.3.2. Where it is identified that a service user might not have the mental capacity to make decisions for themselves, the Housing Service will work with carers, advocates and legal representatives of the service users to ensure they are able to access the services they need in line with the Act.

5.4. Safeguarding vulnerable adults from abuse and neglect

5.4.1. Safeguarding duties apply to adults who:

- Have needs for care and support (whether or not they are receiving any services); and
- Are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect; and
- As a result of those care and support needs are unable to protect themselves from either the risk of, or the experience of abuse or neglect

5.4.2. If a safeguarding concern is identified by a member of staff, they will follow the Council's [Safeguarding Policy](#) to make a referral to Adult Social Services, or the Police in an emergency, to protect the adult from harm¹.

5.5. Domestic abuse

5.5.1. 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.

5.6. Suicide risk

5.6.1. If there are concerns that a service user is experiencing suicidal feelings or is at risk of self harm, the internal Suicide Prevention Guidance (located on the Intranet) will be followed for advice on the risk factors and signs that someone may be having difficulties; how to assess the level of risk; and the help available to reduce the risk.

5.7. Addressing loneliness

5.7.1. Loneliness is defined as “a subjective, unwelcome feeling of lack or loss of companionship. It happens when we have a mismatch between the quantity and quality of social relationships that we have, and those that we want”.²

5.7.2. Adults have been the focus of most of the research around loneliness, although loneliness can affect anyone of any age and background. Loneliness does not discriminate and it is recognised that you do not have to be vulnerable to experience loneliness – although it is acknowledged a person's vulnerability may increase the risk for some.

5.7.3. The Housing Service is aware of the issues of loneliness; how to identify someone is experiencing loneliness; and where to signpost the person for support.

¹ The Safeguarding Policy also covers the procedures to protect children from abuse and neglect

² A Connected Society: A Strategy for Tackling Loneliness, HM Government, 2018, page 18

5.8. Available services and safeguards for vulnerable adults

Housing Solutions

What do they do?

The Housing Solutions Team is responsible for administering the Council's housing register and providing assistance to service users in finding a home using Kent Homechoice, the Kent-wide choice-based lettings system. The team work closely with specialist housing providers in the Borough, to nominate people with disabilities/difficulties or mental health conditions to Housing Scheme or extra care accommodation. In addition, a representative from the team attends regular meetings with Health and Social Services to find housing placements for people who have specialist needs. The team also provide general housing information, advice and assistance to anyone in order to prevent and relieve homelessness.

How do they assist vulnerable adults?

- Service users can nominate an advocate to bid for properties on their behalf or request that a member of the Housing Solutions Team bids for them. Auto bidding also allows bids to be placed automatically for applicants based on their predetermined preferences and needs.
- Each year the team reviews the bidding history of vulnerable service users in order to offer support or advice if it is needed.
- Home visits are available for those who are vulnerable and unable to attend the Council's offices.
- Interviews operate a trigger system so that when issues are identified e.g. drug/alcohol abuse, mental health conditions etc., the Housing Solutions Officer can signpost the service user to appropriate support services.
- The Council has ensured that one unit of emergency temporary accommodation is suitable for a person with a physical disability.
- There are a range of housing options for victims of domestic abuse. This includes refuge or temporary accommodation, Sanctuary Scheme measures and management transfers. An anonymous PO Box is also available, if victims wish to keep their address confidential.
- The Housing Inclusion Service takes a holistic and practical approach to resolving problems and preventing homelessness by improving outcomes in a range of areas, including housing options, managing money, claiming benefits, debt including rent arrears, registering with a GP or getting help from other services, accessing education, training or work opportunities.
- Referrals will be made to the Complex Case Panel, which is a joint panel between the Housing Solutions and Tenancy Services Teams that work together to put in place plans for Council tenants with complex needs who may be at risk of homelessness.
- The Council has signed up to a range of Kent-wide partnership protocols, which seek to prevent key vulnerable groups from becoming homeless.

Housing Schemes and Finance

What do they do?

The Housing Service has 11 housing schemes for people aged 55 and over and provides for a broad section of community needs including people who have housing issues and may require additional assistance with daily living tasks. Each resident has their own flat, with kitchen and bathroom facilities. There are also communal lounges, guest rooms, laundries and gardens at these schemes. The schemes are managed by a team of mobile Housing Scheme Officers.

How do they assist vulnerable adults?

- Housing Scheme Officers are available to provide an enhanced housing management service to tenants, this includes:
 - The provision of an emergency alarm system with 24 hour monitoring
 - Help in maintaining independence
 - Monitoring wellbeing
 - Contacting the GP or emergency services
 - Gaining access to other services, such as, hands on care from Social Services or requesting aids and adaptations to make life easier and safer
 - Guidance on personal safety and security
 - Advice on benefit claims
 - Advice on getting repairs done
 - Pursuing rent arrears
 - Help with paying rent or utility bills
 - Resolve low level anti-social behaviour issues
- All tenants who want to can have personal contact with a Housing Scheme Officer at least once a week as well as a daily call. Residents can also request additional contact with their Housing Scheme Officer for any ad-hoc assistance or advice.

Tenancy Services

What do they do?

The Tenancy Services Team manage the Council's general needs rented accommodation. The team pursue rent arrears, resolve anti-social behaviour and tenancy issues, and ensures that neighbourhoods are safe and socially inclusive spaces. The team also manage the council owned Gypsy and Traveller site.

How do they assist vulnerable adults?

- All new tenants are contacted two weeks (but not later than six weeks) after their tenancy has commenced, giving opportunities to resolve any difficulties or signpost to additional services. Tenants are also asked if they would like to continue with follow-up contact.
- Tenant Round Up (TRU) visits to every tenant are carried out once a year to ensure information on diversity and support needs of tenants are kept up to date.
- 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 table discussion where information is shared, and future action plans are discussed using the knowledge and experience of all attendees.

- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Anti-social behaviour (ASB), hate incidents and other breaches of tenancy conditions

- The Council recognises that vulnerable people may not only be the victims but also the perpetrators of ASB and that early intervention is a priority.
- All 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.
- Housing representatives will work in partnership with a range of different organisations (such as the Police, Social Services, Education, and the Council's Community Safety Unit) to resolve a tenant's problems.
- If a tenant is at risk of violence, the Housing Service may enhance the security of property locks, doors, windows etc. through the Sanctuary Scheme, arrange management transfers and provide further support and reassurance including additional contact via visits and telephone calls.
- Housing Officers will always consider alternative methods to resolve ASB such as anti-social behaviour agreements and referral to support agencies, only taking court action to end a tenancy as a last resort.
- If a family is experiencing problems and if at least one child is engaged with the youth offending team, then the Housing Officer will refer them to a Family Intervention Worker who will engage the whole family and seek to promote their physical, social and emotional wellbeing, while addressing any ASB problems.

Rent arrears

- Where a vulnerable tenant is in rent arrears, extra visits by the Housing Officer may be organised.
- 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.
- The Council can apply for Alternative Payment Arrangements for vulnerable tenants who cannot manage their single monthly payment when they are claiming Universal Credit.

- The requirements for early intervention in the Pre Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords will be followed and action taken to resolve rent arrears before commencing with possession proceedings.
- Referrals will be made to the Housing Inclusion Service to look at ways to help maximise income.
- The Housing Officer will seek to signpost and refer tenants who have ongoing issues with financial management to other organisations, such as Citizens Advice and debt advice agencies, who are able to give advice and guidance regarding budgeting and applying for benefits.

Legal action

- Every attempt will be made to avoid legal action in the first place.
- If appropriate, referrals will be made to the Complex Case Panel, which is a joint panel between the Housing Solutions and Tenancy Services Teams that works together to put in place plans for Council tenants with complex needs who may be at risk of homelessness.
- If court action is taken against a tenant who is vulnerable because of ASB or a breach in tenancy conditions other than for rent arrears a Disability Discrimination Assessment will be carried out prior to the hearing to ensure that the Housing Service is not acting in a discriminatory way.
- Under the Pre Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords, if the Council is aware that a tenant is particularly vulnerable, it will consider at an early stage:
 - Whether or not the tenant has the mental capacity to defend possession proceedings and the extent to which Part 21 of the Civil Procedure Rules applies (children and protected parties).
 - Whether or not any issues arise under the Equality Act 2010
 - Whether or not there is a need for a community care assessment in accordance with the Care Act 2014.

Housing Repairs and Maintenance

What do they do?

The Housing Maintenance Team repair and renew council properties. The team also install disabled adaptations in council properties following a request from an Occupational Therapist.

How do they assist vulnerable adults?

- The Council aims to prioritise non-emergency repairs for elderly and vulnerable tenants wherever possible (for example heating and hot water) where the nature of the repair could risk the health or wellbeing of that person or household.
- 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.
- 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.
- Where vulnerable tenants are identified through the stock condition survey programme, works are completed to support the tenants.

- 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.
- 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.
- The team work with an Occupational Therapist to make a home suitable for a disabled tenant through the installation of suitable adaptations.
- The free Handyperson scheme carries out small DIY tasks for tenants who are 65 or disabled, or who live in a Council housing scheme.
- A Decoration Scheme is offered to households where all members of the household are 65 years or older, or if a person is physically disabled and living independently. The Council will provide the labour for one room to be decorated every 5 years. All materials must be provided by the tenant.
- Tenants can request a tradeswoman to carry out a repair or a female chaperone to attend when maintenance repair works are carried out.
- When carrying out major works, the contractor's Resident Liaison Officer will meet with the tenant, taking into account their needs and will provide a bespoke service which may include moving furniture, emptying cupboards etc.
- A respite room is available for tenants in the contractor's offices, while work is being undertaken on their property.
- If a repairs or gas servicing contractor has concerns that a tenant may require extra support or there are safeguarding concerns, they fill out a 'concern card' and return it to the Housing Officer. The Housing Officer then contacts the tenant to ascertain and if appropriate resolve any unmet need.

Private Sector Housing

What do they do?

The Private Sector Housing Team aim to improve the condition of housing in the private sector in all private sector tenancies (privately rented, owner occupied, housing association tenancies) and housing types including traditional family homes, houses in multiple occupation (HMO), mobile homes/caravans/tents and houseboats.

How do they assist vulnerable adults?

- Inspections are carried out in private rented properties (including supported living units which can fall under the definition of a HMO) and housing health and safety standards are enforced.
- A variety of financial support schemes are provided to assist in adapting, (including disabled adaptation grants), improving and repairing private sector housing to enable hospital discharge, reduce admissions and readmissions into hospital and promote independence, subject to a test of resources/eligibility criteria.
- Home visits are available for service users who are vulnerable and need assistance to complete grant application forms via the Home Improvement Agency.
- Advice is provided on getting repairs done and service users are signposted to Checkatrade and TrustMark for a list of vetted contractors and builders in the local area upon request.

- Where appropriate, service users are signposted or referred to Kent Fire and Rescue Service for Safe and Well home visits.
- Service users are signposted to the Home Improvement Agency who are able to help vulnerable people access grants for repairs or adaptations to improve their home. They can also provide a handyperson service, gardening service, decorating service, carry out home security checks and signpost vulnerable persons to other support services.
- The team investigate cases in the private sector of alleged harassment and illegal eviction.

6. COMPLAINTS

- 6.1. If a service user is not satisfied with the service they have received from the Housing Service, the Council's [Corporate Complaints Procedure](#) can be followed. Complaints leaflets are also available from the Council offices.
- 6.2. The [Housing Ombudsman](#) or the [Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman](#) can be contacted if further advice and support is needed on making a complaint to the Council.

7. DATA PROTECTION

- 7.1. The UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018 regulate the processing of information relating to individuals, which includes the obtaining, holding, using or disclosing of such information.
- 7.2. The Council needs to collect and use certain types of information about its service users in order to carry out its everyday business and to fulfil its objectives and its statutory functions. The Council's:
 - [Data Protection Policy](#) sets out how it will protect special category and criminal convictions personal data; and
 - [Housing Services \(Landlord and Tenant\)](#), [Homelessness Services](#) and [Private Sector Housing](#) Privacy Notices explain that the Council collects personal information to administer its Housing Services.

8. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 8.1. The Council is committed to welcoming and valuing diversity, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling unlawful discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The Council, in delivering this Policy, will have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and ensure that no individual is discriminated against based on their sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, religion, belief, disability or age.
- 8.2. The Public Sector Equality Duty is a duty on the Council and that responsibility cannot be delegated to a contractor/service provider and is a continuing duty.
- 8.3. This policy has been subject to a Customer Access Review; to assess the impact it will have on equality.

9. REVIEW

- 9.1. This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier to address legislative, regulatory, best practice or operational issues.