

Equality Impact Assessment Stage Three Telling the Story

Name of service area/policy/strategy reviewed

Vulnerable Tenants Policy

What were the issues?

There were a number of staff and partners engaged in the review of the Vulnerable Tenants Policy, and the production of the accompanying equality impact assessment, including:

- Ben Ollier – Allocations & Supported Housing Team Leader
- Emma Hartley – Continuous Improvement Manager
- Managing Agents of the Association's supported housing stock

Feedback Received from staff

- Staff understand the importance of maintaining a register of vulnerable tenants and understand that they have a role to play to ensure that this database is continually being updated with new vulnerable tenants identified so that services and information can be tailored to take into account their diversities and particular needs.
- Further work needs to be undertaken by the Association to review current vulnerable tenants that have been identified on the Association's computer systems to make sure that they are correctly and easily identifiable on the system. Staff felt that the system was not always accurate and did not correctly reflect vulnerable tenants nor did it identify their specific area of vulnerability.

Feedback Received from managing agents

- The Association does not currently produce any of its service leaflets, documentation or tenancy agreements in an easy to read format, particularly important when a high number of vulnerable tenants have literacy and sight issues, as well as other complex needs.
- Questions were raised over the current policy, which states that repairs timescales should be undertaken within different timescales to those of non-vulnerable tenants. The policy states three levels of priority but does not state the service standard that can be expected from each level of priority.
- Managing Agents of supported housing accommodation have specifically requested that all tenants in supported housing should automatically flag on the Association's computer systems as vulnerable.
- It is felt that the current policy in its current form is very basic and therefore there is potential for tenants to be missed from the register and therefore not receive the correct level of service/support. This policy needs to be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of current, and prospective tenants, as well as support the delivery of an effective service for the Association's vulnerable tenants.

Actions identified

1. Produce all service leaflets, tenancy agreements, documents and other information in 'easy read format' making them more accessible to all tenants. Feedback on usefulness of documents and accessibility to be sought via group discussions or surveys with vulnerable tenants. Involvement methods to be tailored to ensure that all who wish to feedback are able to do so.

2. The Association to continue with the tenant profiling exercise making use of this data to shape services to meet the diversities and particular needs of its tenants. Staff need to work with managing agents to collect profiling data for those vulnerable tenants who have not already provided this information.
3. Maintain and build on partnership working with managing agents and external organisations for allocations for supported housing/sheltered housing.
4. Hold an annual meeting for all managing agents & vulnerable tenants to attend, at which the Association can obtain feedback from the managing agents and tenants on the services delivered by the Association for its vulnerable tenants and review whether there are any gaps in service or information provision.
5. Improve facilities for helping older tenants with applying for housing on line.
6. Review and improve procedures and support services for translation services for non-English speaking tenants.
7. Continue to use the tenant profiling data to make sure that the Association is tailoring its services to the varying needs of its tenants. Work is currently underway throughout the whole housing department to review the tenant database and staff are updating records for all vulnerable tenants identified to ensure that all of their details are recorded correctly.
8. Have clear links with support agencies in all local authority areas in which the Association has stock to ensure that there are avenues of support and advice for staff and tenants to utilise as required.

Outcomes for customers

The actions identified will be used to shape changes to the Vulnerable Tenants Policy and they will contribute to a number of outcomes for the Association's vulnerable tenants including:

- Greater satisfaction with services received
- More accessible information on the Association and its services provided in an easy to read format.
- Greater use of tenant profile information which will allow staff to ensure they are capturing any potential underlying issues and providing support to them.
- Tailored service delivery to ensure the diversities and particular needs of tenants are met.
- Links with support agencies established to ensure that staff are able to provide support and information to those with particular needs and can tailor the support offered.
- Multiple involvement methods offered to ensure that all vulnerable tenants who wish to engage with the Association are able to do so.

Conclusion

This assessment has enabled Cosmopolitan Housing Association to look closer at its Vulnerable Tenants Policy and identify the areas which affect its tenants. The implementation of the actions identified as a result of this assessment will make the improve the service making it more accessible to all.

The actions identified in this assessments will be incorporated into a wider service improvement plan to ensure that they are delivered and link into the wider work that the organisation undertakes.