

Plymouth Community Homes



Vulnerable Persons Policy

- **Purpose**

Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) aims to provide a high level of service and care to its vulnerable tenants and service users when carrying out all of its day to day business activities.

PCH is committed to providing high quality homes and services that meet the needs of vulnerable people, without losing sight of the importance of ensuring that wherever possible, such people are able to maintain their independence and their freedom of choice.

This Policy outlines how PCH will aim to ensure that we are able:

- to respond efficiently and effectively where a resident or service user is vulnerable and may require assistance;
- to prevent abuse;
- to limit instances of tenancy breakdown;
- to develop sustainable communities.

- **Definition(s)**

PCH recognises that it is not possible to outline every situation where a resident or service user could be defined as vulnerable. Equally, if a resident or service user meets one or some of the suggested conditions described in this policy, it does not necessarily mean they require (or want) additional support. Therefore the categories listed later in this policy are designed to assist staff in making a judgment as to the support needs of residents or service users, so that the appropriate processes and procedures can be followed.

To assist staff in supporting residents or service users who may be vulnerable, PCH defines a vulnerable person as being:

‘Any resident or service user who is, or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health, or other disability, age, or illness, and is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation’

- **Policy**

1. Identifying vulnerable People
2. Abuse
3. Meeting the needs of vulnerable people
4. Equality and Diversity
5. Monitoring and review

1. Identifying Vulnerable People

1.1 PCH will aim to identify and support residents and service users who are or may later become vulnerable. This will be achieved by having alert, responsive and well trained staff, supported by well documented procedures with clear referral processes from and to support agencies.

1.2 PCH will maintain up-to-date information about vulnerabilities and general tenant profile on the Housing Computer system that is used by all frontline staff and use alert flags to enable staff to identify such residents at the point of accessing computer records for a tenancy.

1.3 The main methods by which an individual's vulnerabilities may be highlighted are via:

- Interest in or application for Housing via Devon's Choice Based Lettings scheme;
- Requests for any service provided by PCH Housing;
- The local knowledge of PCH staff;
- Home visits by PCH staff (e.g. during repairs, modernisation, tenancy checks, warden callouts);
- Agency referrals (e.g. the Probation Service, Social Services);
- Partner organisations;

(This list is not exhaustive).

1.4 A resident or service user's vulnerability may be indicated by them meeting any one of the following criteria; although it is likely that they will meet more than one (this is not an exhaustive list). However, it should be noted that disability or age alone does not signify that an individual is vulnerable.

Status	Functional Ability	Support Networks
Mental Health problems Learning Difficulties Aged over 65 years Alcohol / Substance misuse Recent History of homelessness Threatened with or a victim of Domestic Violence Victim of ASB or harassment Refugee or Asylum seeker Ex Offender Leaving Care Lone Parent Under 25 Severe Physical health problems, debilitating illness or disability HIV/AIDS Young people at risk Hospital leaver	Self Neglect Unable to perform self care tasks Difficulty with significant daily living tasks Significant problems with finances or budgeting Severely impaired mobility Risk of falls Sensory Impairment Language/ Literacy difficulties Physically frail Difficulties with child care responsibilities	Lives alone Recently bereaved or separated Partner/ carers unable to provide support with current problems Self Isolating No (or inadequate) support advice.

2. Abuse

2.1 All frontline PCH staff will receive regular (every 2-3 years) Vulnerable adult abuse awareness training.

2.2 If a PCH staff member becomes aware of, or suspects any incidents of abuse toward a child or vulnerable adult, they should immediately inform their line manager of their suspicions. This will then allow a referral to Plymouth City Council Children's Services or Adult Social Care teams or Devon and Cornwall Police where necessary. PCH Housing Officers should not directly intervene in such cases.

3. Meeting the needs of Vulnerable People

In general terms, PCH will take the following approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable residents (after gaining their consent):

- Liaison with appropriate support agencies;
- Where resources allow, adapt our properties to meet the disability needs of our residents;
- Discuss at point of application for housing, any additional needs or support needs of vulnerable members of the household, with follow up checks at sign up and regular visits throughout their tenancy;
- Maintain a flexible approach to letting properties to vulnerable people, management lets, transfers and nominations from the Local Authority
- Take firm action to reduce Anti-social Behaviour, harassment, and victimization, whether racially motivated or not;
- Take a flexible approach to the design and adaptation of our homes where this is practical and possible;
- Provide appropriate fixtures and fittings in our properties which are specifically designed for people with disabilities;
- Provide translations, interpreters, signers, audiotapes, braille, and large print documents to meet identified needs (where needed);
- Take into account the views of carers, advocates and personal representatives when consulting with vulnerable residents or service users as long as their explicit permission has been sought and recorded in advance. This may be requested in writing if appropriate.
- Comply with relevant legislation and Best Practice;
- Ensure staff are effectively trained to be able to deal with vulnerabilities, and understand how to support vulnerable individuals sensitively and in confidence;
- Make sure all information used to identify vulnerable people is regularly reviewed and managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act, and is only stored and shared with relevant staff once consent is obtained (in line with our Data Protection, Confidentiality, and Access to Information policy); and

- Take any other reasonable steps to assist the vulnerable person to access services or maintain their tenancy.
- If for any reason we are required to take legal action against a Vulnerable Person (for example for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour), we will behave with sensitivity and work closely with the appropriate support services and agencies.

4. Equality and Diversity

4.1 PCH recognises that it operates in a community within which there is wide social diversity, and are committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity.

4.2 Through the management of our housing stock we aim to treat all customers fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

4.3 To enable all residents to have clear information and equal access to our available properties, PCH publishes information in a range of appropriate languages and formats and through a range of media. Feedback is also accepted through a variety of different routes to reflect individual customers' preferences or needs.

4.4 This policy has been designed to be fully inclusive regardless of the ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious belief, or disability of service users or residents.

4.5 The policy has been developed giving full consideration to the PCH Equality and Diversity policy.

5. Monitoring and review:

5.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly in accordance with PCH's review timetable by the Customer Focus Committee.

5.2 Procedures relating to this policy will also be periodically reviewed, taking into account any operational issues that arise.

5.3 Review will take into account any changes in law and best practice.

5.4 The reviews will include equality impact assessments to ensure that all of our policies encourage and support our determination to promote equality and eliminate unlawful discrimination.

5.5 Plymouth Community Homes will ensure that opportunities are provided for tenants and leaseholders to engage in the process of reviewing and monitoring this policy.

5.6 Systems will be in place to monitor progress against agreed targets, and reported via the Customer Focus Committee to the Board on an annual basis.

5.7 Monitoring will include the following elements

- assessments of tenant satisfaction with what is being done, making sure that methods of doing so take into account the access needs of all;
- regular reports to the board who have overall responsibility for ensuring that the policy delivers continuous improvement and value for money

- systems that identify performance issues and monitor the progress of actions to address them

- **Relevant legislation**

Disability Discrimination Act

Human Rights Act

Mental Health Act (1983?)

- **Links to other policies and strategies**

Equality and Diversity Policy

Social Inclusion and anti-poverty Policy,

Hate Crime and Harassment Policy,

Domestic Abuse Policy,

Tenancy Management Policy,

Allocations Policy,

Plymouth City Council's Vulnerable Adults and Child Protection Strategies,

Policies and Procedures.