

## VULNERABLE PERSON(S) PROCEDURE



### MONITORING INFORMATION:

<b>POLICY/PROCEDURE/STRATEGY:</b>	<b>VULNERABLE PERSON(S) PROCEDURE</b>
<b>DATE APPROVED:</b>	<b>NOVEMBER 2023</b>
<b>EXPIRY DATE:</b>	<b>NOVEMBER 2026</b>
<b>OWNER:</b>	<b>PSL &amp; TENANCY SUSTAINMENT MANAGER</b>
<b>APPROVAL ROUTE:</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE MANAGEMENT TEAM</b>

# Vulnerable Person(s) Procedure

## 1. Introduction/Definition

This procedure supports the Vulnerable Person(s) Policy, where Teign Housing define a vulnerable person to be:

*“Anyone who experiences difficulties with everyday living and/or needs additional support to meet their obligations under the tenancy/licence agreement.”*

Any person(s) can be vulnerable, and it does not only include those vulnerable for the purposes of receiving community care and/or support services or who have a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

It is important to understand that not all those falling within the protected groups will be vulnerable, and people may well be vulnerable for reasons other than those specifically covered by equalities legislation. Our approach to vulnerable people recognises that vulnerability need not be a permanent state and that people may be vulnerable at different times for different reasons (e.g., following bereavement or relationship breakdown).

Appendix A contains some suggestions of people who *might* be vulnerable, though this is not intended to be an exhaustive list. A person can be vulnerable because of a single problem and/or condition or a combination of factors. Our approach does not assume that whole groups of people are vulnerable. For example, it is not correct to assume that all older people are vulnerable even though there may be evidence to suggest that many are.

## 2. When to use this procedure

This procedure should be used when making a decision which will either impact the services being accessed or delivered by Teign Housing and ensure one or more of the following is being met:

- Accessibility
- Equality
- Diversity

### 3. Legal and Regulatory considerations:

**The Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard requires Registered Providers to:**

- provide choices, information and communication that is appropriate to the diverse needs of their tenants in the delivery of all standards.
- treat all tenants with fairness and respect
- demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.
- demonstrate how they respond to tenants' needs in the way they provide services and communicate with tenants.

**The Tenancy Standard requires Registered Providers to:**

- consider the needs of those households who are vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness, and households with children, including through the provision of tenancies which provide a reasonable degree of stability.

**The Human Rights Act 1998** requires all public authorities, or bodies exercising public functions (which includes Teign Housing for certain services) to act compatibly with human rights. The human rights most relevant to housing are:

- right to respect for private life, family life and the home
- right to a fair trial
- prohibition of discrimination.

The key things to consider are whether we are acting legally, fairly, transparently, and proportionately and in line with our own policies.

It is important, however, to avoid applying a 'blanket' approach to policies. We must allow individual circumstances to be considered in our decision-making, particularly in relation to vulnerability. The ability to take account of individual circumstances will be an important consideration in undertaking impact assessments when developing or reviewing our strategies, policies, procedures, or functions.

**Pre-Action Protocol for Possession Claims by Social Landlords.** The protocol sets out the requirements that a Registered Provider of Social Housing must have either considered or complied with in relation to possession proceedings. The aims of the protocol are to:

- encourage more pre-action contact and exchange of information between landlords and tenants;
- enable the parties to avoid litigation by settling the matter if possible; and
- to enable court time to be used more effectively if proceedings are necessary.

Courts will consider whether the protocol has been followed when considering what orders to make. Part 1 of the protocol requires us to consider the vulnerability of the tenant prior to the commencement of proceedings. If we are aware the tenant has difficulty reading or understanding information, we must take reasonable steps to ensure that we have communicated appropriately and that the tenant understands any information we have given. Where the tenant is under 18, or particularly vulnerable, we need to consider at an early stage:

- whether the person is likely to have mental capacity to defend the proceedings (if not we should make an application for the appointment of a litigation friend)
- whether or not any issues are likely to arise under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. possibility of a tenant with a disability, which includes mental health issues, making a disability discrimination claim).
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**GDPR/Data Protection Act** – governs the protection of personal data. It is not a barrier to sharing information but provides a framework to ensure that personal information about a person is shared appropriately; this will particularly apply if we are sharing information with support providers in relation to a person’s vulnerability.

#### 4. Support provided by Teign Housing

(This is not intended to be an exhaustive list)

Providing information and help with accessing services will include:

- providing advice and signposting people to other organisations
- making referrals within Teign Housing to provide additional support e.g. Head Start, Occupational Therapist

- making referrals to partner agencies.
- helping with the completion of forms and provision of documents e.g. for verification purposes
- helping with applying and bidding for housing under choice-based lettings
- reasonable adjustments as to how we deliver our services.
- funding through our hardship grant

We use profiles and other vulnerability information proactively to inform the way we deliver our services. This may include:

- more regular contact maintained by an appropriate staff member.
- undertaking home visits
- agreeing a nominated contact person (e.g. a carer)
- assisted lettings scheme (new tenants will access white goods or carpet)
- allowing more time to get to the telephone or door.
- accelerating repairs for people with ill health/vulnerability issues
- waiving recharges for repairs in certain circumstances e.g. domestic abuse
- undertake and charge for a repair that is a resident's responsibility to complete.
- requesting housing benefits/housing costs for some residents to be paid directly to Teign Housing

Our Tenancy Sustainment Strategy, and associated projects, aim to help customers to lead successful tenancies by focusing on the four domains (financial inclusion, digital inclusion, health and wellbeing and positive participation). The Head Start (Tenancy Sustainment) Team is responsible for developing Teign Housing's response to Welfare Reform and current cost-of-living (COL) pressures, this will include up-skilling staff to enable them to advise and sign-post customers appropriately and in addition complete individual casework.

## 5. Partnership Working

Teign Housing will often be unable to provide the necessary support and advice to a vulnerable resident and we will seek to access specialist support services provided by outside agencies. To ensure the best outcome for customers we will seek the customer's agreement before making any referral. One exception is a safeguarding matter where requesting consent will put the vulnerable person at increased risk of harm. In circumstances

such as this, we will refer to our safeguarding policy and procedure.

We will ensure all staff providing front-line services will have a good working knowledge of the availability and remit of support agencies and the various referral mechanisms in place. The management team will monitor the effectiveness of outcomes where a vulnerable person has been referred for specialist support through 1-2-1s (Pathways to Success) with front-line staff.

## 6. ASB and Vulnerable Person(s) Meeting

The designated safeguarding lead for Teign Housing and Customers and Communities Management Team will meet once monthly to monitor the effectiveness of this policy and procedure (referring to the performance and management framework). This will create an internal mechanism to raise cases of significant concern where appropriate advice and support can be provided to ensure legal and regulatory considerations are made.

Only those deemed high-risk “red status” (adopting the principles of RAG) cases will be discussed at the meeting, the following can help establish which those cases might be. However professional judgement must be considered when assessing cases which could escalate to high risk without the appropriate intervention.

**Red Status** - High-risk. Immediate attention and careful consideration are required. The environment may be hostile, and the risk of harm or injury is found likely. Staff will be required to dynamically assess the risk with their line manager should they need to attend the address.

**Amber Status** - Medium risk. Concerns significant enough that should it not be responded to or managed appropriately can escalate as high-risk. The environment could be hostile and tense. Careful planning should be considered before visiting. Potential risk of harm or injury towards the individual and/or member of staff

**Green Status** - Low-level risk, requires additional support and arms-length management. The environment is not found to be hostile, and the risk of harm or injury is low towards the individual and/or member staff

## 7. Appendix A – Examples of people who *might* be vulnerable

(This is not intended to be an exhaustive list)

People with/who are:

- a physical, sensory, or learning disability
- mental health issues
- serious illness
- experiencing domestic abuse
- an older person
- pregnant
- unemployed
- ex-military
- leaving care
- ex-offenders
- financially excluded
- substance abuse problems
- unable to speak English/or English is not a first language

During a resident's customer journey with Teign Housing, indicators of vulnerability might include:

- homelessness/repeat homelessness
- hospitalisation
- periods of sustained illness at home
- bereavement
- transitioning from supported accommodation to general needs or independent living
- evidence of neighbour harassment or abuse toward the individual or household
- evidence of anti-social behaviour by the individual or household
- unemployment/reduction in hours
- divorce/relationship breakdown
- arrears of rent or other debt problems

## 8. Appendix B – Identifying Vulnerability

Identifying vulnerability, or potential vulnerability, at an early stage, enables us to make a timely response and, where possible, tailor our services to meet the needs of the individual or household. Where Teign Housing does not provide a service direct, identifying vulnerability can prompt staff to signpost people or make a referral to relevant organisations that can provide support.

(This is not intended to be an exhaustive list)

### **Proactive measures to identify vulnerability:**

- Details will be recorded on the Customer Relationship Management Civica Cx (CRM) to support awareness about a resident's vulnerability
- Pre-tenancy Interview PTI – all new potential tenants will be assessed in terms of their capability to sustain a tenancy as per our Allocations Policy.
- New Tenant Visits (NTV), 9-Month Reviews, (9MR) Keeping in Touch (KIT) visits, Fixed-Term Reviews (FTRs)
- Affordability checks - checks to ensure the property allocated is affordable to the tenant to prevent financial difficult or rent arrears
- 12-month New Tenant Coordinator support – a support service provided for up to 12 months to support the onboarding and transition into a new tenancy at Teign.
- Risk Assessments: As part of Teign Housing's Policy and Procedures for managing Anti-social Behaviour and Domestic Abuse cases (otherwise referred to as a Caada Dash Risk Assessment).
- Tenancy Breaches: Rent arrears, damage to property, anti-social behaviour

### **Reactive measures to identify vulnerability:**

- Concerns expressed by staff members, operatives, or customers
- EMT, Leadership Team, and Management when interacting with customers e.g. (when handling complaints)
- Police, Social or Health Care professionals and other statutory and voluntary services.
- A member of the resident's family or a friend



All members of staff are expected to take every opportunity to update Civica Cx information when interacting with customers and to be able to identify the early signs of vulnerability and to escalate the matter where they have significant concerns about the risk of harm to a person as per our Safeguarding Policy and Procedure.

### 9. Appendix C – Performance Management Framework

Every quarter the PSL and Tenancy Sustainment Manager will report on the Key Performance Indicators as appended to the Tenancy Sustainment Strategy authored by the Director of Customers and Communities and our safeguarding scorecard which is to be presented to the Executive Management Team.

Objective:	Success Measurement/KPIs:	Progress Q1:	Progress Q2:	Progress Q3:	Progress Q4:
1. Mitigate risk of evictions/prevention of homelessness	No of court/warrant applications & evictions carried out per quarter				
	Zero evictions (relating to rent arrears and/or tenancy issues)				
2. Prevention of tenancy failure within first 12 months	No more than 25% of new tenancies in arrears				
	Average £ arrears for new tenants vs existing tenants	<b>New tenants:</b> <b>Existing tenants:</b>	<b>New tenants:</b> <b>Existing tenants:</b>	<b>New Tenants:</b> <b>Existing tenants:</b>	
	No of new tenants who qualified for ALS				
	Average arrears levels for beneficiaries of the Assisted Lettings Scheme	£	£	£	
	No of referrals to specialist agencies				
3. Improve life chances/quality of life	40% KITs p/a on general needs tenants				
	50% KITs p/a Independent Living				
4. Build capacity to develop skills for our tenants to enjoy successful tenancies	Person-centred goal plans completed on 50% of Head Start and Independent Living's caseloads	% Goal Plans for all Head Start cases engaging.	% Goal Plans for all Head Start cases engaging.	% Goal plans Head Start	

		% Goal Plans for all new IW allocation	% Goal Plans for all new IW allocation	% Goal Plan for new IW	
5. Minimise void turnaround times and reduce void costs	100% affordability/verification checks on new tenants	% Complete	% Complete	% Complete	
	No more than 0.5% void loss	YTD void loss is %	YTD void loss %	% YTD	
	4 days turnaround on GN 5 days turnaround on IL	Not achieved GN – YTD is .. days  Achieved IL – YTD is .. days	Target achieved GN – YTD .. days  Target achieved IL – YTD .. days	Target achieved GN – YTD .. days  Target achieved IL – YTD .. days	
	Reduce average void costs	No data	No data	No data	
6. Keep no of arrears cases and arrears levels to the minimum	At least 100% rent collection	% collection rate	%	%	
	Arrears no more than 2.20% of rent debit	% current arrears	%	%	
	Achieve at least 85% MobySoft recommended actions				
	Minimum of 73% tenants paying in advance	%	%	%	
	100% of 'at risk of eviction cases' referred to Head Start	%	%	%	
	85% of 'at risk of eviction cases' on payment plans	%	%	%	

We will measure the effectiveness of this policy by recording the following performance indicators at each ASB and Vulnerable Person(s) monthly meeting and include our safeguarding scorecard:

- Achieving zero evictions, abandonments or otherwise failed/failing tenancies involving a vulnerable person or household
- A reduction in the number of cases of anti-social behaviour or harassment involving a vulnerable person (either as victim or perpetrator)
- Zero complaints based on a failure to support vulnerable residents
- Evidence of robust impact assessments and/or co-development/co-design being undertaken for all services

	Total Year End	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	YTD
Cause for concerns	XXX	XX of which	XX of which	XX of which	XX of which	
Or		XX: Support in place	XX: Support in place	XX: Support in place	XX: Support in place	
Safeguarding Referrals		XX: Referral made	XX: Referral made	XX: Referral made	XX: Referral made	
		XX: NSO Investigations	XX: NSO Investigations	XX: NSO Investigations	XX: NSO Investigations	