

Policy Support Contract

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1. Purpose

This policy applies to Signpost Housing Association and Signpost Care Partnerships' (the Associations) and applies to accommodation based and floating support services provided to the Associations' customers including:

- residents living in the Associations' supported, independent living, and general needs rented accommodation
- residents living in accommodation directly managed by the Associations
- clients who are not resident in one of the Associations' properties but who are in receipt of the support service
- clients who have applied for, but are not yet in receipt of the support service.

This policy has been developed to ensure the Associations comply with current legislation, Supporting People Funding requirements, Tenant Services Authority Standards, regulatory code and guidance, and good practice and includes:

- the provision of housing related support to develop and sustain an individual's capacity to live independently in their accommodation.
- ensuring contracts and support plans are reviewed and developed in liaison with the resident/client and all relevant stakeholders
- ensuring that where support is provided to a resident of the Associations' accommodation, the cost of this support is identified separately from the rent account.

The Associations strive to achieve the Spectrum Group mission:

'To be recognised and respected for providing quality homes and services. empowering people, supporting active communities and building better futures'.

This policy supports the Associations' overarching plans and strategies to deliver quality services and ensure accessibility to these services for all the Associations' customers.

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2. Definitions

2.1 Supporting People

Supporting People is the government programme for funding, planning and monitoring housing related support services. Its aim is to improve the quality and effectiveness of the support services at a local level.

2.2 Support services

Support services can be categorised as 'short-term' and 'long-term' in accordance with their aims and objectives.

2.2.1 Short term services

Short term services (floating support and accommodation based support) are provided for a period of up to two years with the intention of moving an individual to be able to live independently or to increase the individual's ability to live independently.

Short term services are provided free to the individual under block subsidy arrangements.

2.2.2 Long term services

Long-term services are not time limited and are provided on a continuous basis and are often characterised as open-ended. Long term services aim to maintain a limited degree of independent living which is not expected to increase, and may diminish over time, as part of a permanent or open-ended arrangement.

Individual support charges apply to long term services and are based on individual's ability to pay. For residents/clients who, following an assessment of their financial circumstances, can afford to pay. Those who cannot afford to pay are eligible to claim a subsidy from the local authority. (see Section 2.4)

2.3 Support contracts

The Support Contract is a contract requiring payment to be made to the support provider and can be enforced by an action in the courts for breach of the agreement (e.g. by a small claim to recover any unpaid charges). It will be a breach of the individual support contract/agreement for the resident/client not to pay for the services and, in those circumstances; the support services may be withdrawn.

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The Support Contract in long-term accommodation-based support will become a contract for the provision of services between the Support Provider and the resident/client.

2.4 Block subsidy arrangements

Block subsidy arrangements are the primary means by which Supporting People monies are paid for long term accommodation-based support. Payments are made at regular intervals, usually to the support provider.

The Supporting People Administering Authority will pay individual subsidies for all eligible clients who are unable to pay the Supporting People charge. It remains the sole responsibility of the client to advise the support provider of any change in their financial circumstances which may effect their eligibility to claim or continue to receive subsidy for their support charge.

3. Legislation, Regulatory and Good Practice Requirements

This policy complies with, and aims to support:

- Data Protection Act 1998
- Housing and Regeneration Bill 2008
- Key Line of Enquiry, Supported housing
- Supporting People Quality Assessment Framework (February 2009).

3.1 Relationship with other Strategies, Polices and Procedures

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following Spectrum Housing Group (SHG), Signpost Housing Association (SHA), Signpost Care Partnerships (SCP) policies and procedures.

- Allocations and Lettings Policy (SHA/SCP)
- Access and Customer Care Strategy (SHA/SCP)
- Allocation and Lettings Policy (SHA/SCP)
- Community Involvement Strategy (SHA/SCP)
- Confidentiality, Privacy and Data Protection Policy (SHG)
- Eligibility Policy for Sheltered Housing and Peace of Mind Support Service in Dorset Policy (SHA)

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- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy (SHG)
- Financial Inclusion Strategy (SHA/SCP)
- Handling Disclosure Information Procedure (SHG)
- Health and Safety Policy (SHG)
- Homelessness Policy (SHA/SCP)
- Lone Worker Policy (SHA/SCP)
- Safeguarding and Protection from Abuse, Vulnerable Adults and Children Policy (SHA/SCP)
- Support Needs and Risk Assessment Policy and Procedure (SHA/SCP)
- Value for Money Strategy (SHA/SCP).

4. Support Contract Policy

The Associations are fully committed to providing a resident/client centered approach during the provision of support and the development of individual support plans and contracts.

In undertaking support planning and risk assessments actions should be taken in accordance with the Support Needs and Risk Assessment Policy and Procedure.

4.1 Communication and information

The Associations will use a variety of methods to ensure residents/clients are fully aware of the support service as detailed in the Support Needs and Risk Assessment Policy and Procedure.

4.2 Working in partnership

- In developing and reviewing the support service Signpost Care Partnerships will, where appropriate, involve the resident/client and other relevant stakeholders and will ensure the service includes
- a service that is of high quality
- a service that is strategically relevant
- a service that provides value for money.

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4.3 Support , long term accommodation-based

The long term accommodation-based support service will be provided by either Signpost Care Partnerships, or by another support provider.

All residents/clients entering into a long term support service will be required to sign a separate support plan contract.

Long terms support is provided for any vulnerable adult who may require support due to their circumstances which may include:

- physical disability
- learning disability
- HIV / AIDS
- mental health
- independent living residents.

4.3.1 Access to long term accommodation-based support

- Access to long term accommodation-based support will be undertaken in accordance with the Allocations and Lettings Policy and Procedure.

4.4 Variations to supporting people contracts

Signpost Care Partnerships recognises that there may be occasions where an existing Supporting People contract may need to be changed due to changes which may include:

- minor administrative changes which do not impact on the terms of the contract, such as change of address
- outcomes of service reviews.

Any variation to existing contracts will be undertaken in liaison with the Supporting People Administering Authority and will, where appropriate involve residents/clients and other relevant stakeholders.

4.5 Support, short term, floating support service

The Associations recognise the benefits of floating support which include:

- the ability to access to housing which is non specialised
- promotion of independence

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- developing individual skills to help sustain a tenancy.

The floating support service will be provided either by Signpost Care Partnerships or by another support provider.

The floating support service will be provided to individuals who require assistance in maintaining their tenancy or developing independent living skills. The service will identify and facilitate access to locally available services as appropriate.

Support will be offered to residents/clients who are considered to be able to achieve independence from the service within six months to a maximum of two years from the commencement of the support. Where the person requires further support the service can be re-accessed through the referral process.

The floating support service is provided for any vulnerable adult who may require support due to their circumstances which may include:

- homelessness
- learning disability
- mental health issues
- substance misuse
- domestic violence
- ex offenders
- young vulnerable people.

4.5.1 Accessing floating support

The floating support service may be accessed via a number of routes which include:

- direct referrals from referring agencies
- referrals from the Associations' staff
- direct request from an individual.
- All referrals will be assessed and support plans developed in accordance with the Support Needs and Risk Assessment Policy.

The Association's floating support service is not responsible for housing management related tasks, personal care, practical help on a regular basis, or

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counselling.

4.6 Peace of Mind support service

Signpost Care Partnerships provide a support service for independent living housing schemes and for individuals who would benefit from the support that can be offered to help an individual maintain their ability to remain independent within their own home. This service is available whether the individual lives in Associations' accommodation, privately owned or rented accommodation.

Eligibility for the Independent Living and the Peace of Mind service will be assessed in accordance with the Eligibility Policy for Sheltered Housing and Peace of Mind Support Service in Dorset Policy (SHA).

The Supporting People Administering Authority will pay individual subsidies for all eligible clients who are unable to pay the Supporting People charge. It remains the sole responsibility of the client to advise the support provider of any change in their financial circumstances which may effect their eligibility to make future claims for/ or continue to make existing claims for subsidy for their support charge.

Clients who do not live in an Independent Living Scheme are required to pay a weekly hire charge for the emergency alarm equipment. There is no subsidy available towards this charge and the responsibility for the payment of this charge is that of the client.

4.7 Individual support contracts

All individuals who receive support from Signpost Care Partnerships will be required to enter into a separate support plan contract with the Association.

4.7.1 Support planning

All support planning, including annual reviews, the ending of or withdrawal of the support service, will be undertaken in accordance with the Support Needs and Risk Assessment Policy and Procedure.

4.8 Provision of support by other providers

Where other support providers provide the support service to residents in the Associations' accommodation the Associations' will work in partnership to ensure a co-ordinated approach is achieved and will develop Service Level Agreements (SLA) with the support provider which will include:

- clarifying the respective roles and responsibilities

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- undertaking regular liaison to monitor and review the SLA
- agreed communication methods and requirements
- health and safety

4.9 Individual payment of support charges

Where a resident is living in one of the Associations' properties and the support is provided by Signpost Care Partnerships this will be dealt with in accordance with the Income Management Policy and Procedure.

Where the client is not a resident in the Associations' properties and the support is provided by Signpost care Partnerships the account will be managed by the Finance Team.

4.10 Data protection, communication and information sharing

4.10.1 Disclosure of information

The Associations will not disclose information to other agencies without the prior consent of the resident/client, except where a person is considered to be at risk, or if there is a risk of serious harm to anyone involved in the situation, or when required to do so by law or by an order of a court.

The Associations will be party to relevant protocols and formal agreements to ensure that, where appropriate, information can be shared with other agencies. Any disclosure of information will be undertaken in accordance with the relevant policy, procedure, protocol or formal agreement.

4.10.2 Storage of information

All data and resident/client files will be managed and stored in accordance with the relevant policies and procedures.

4.11 Monitoring and control

Monitoring of the support service will include:

- regular contact and reviews of Service Level Agreements that have been agreed with referral agencies
- quarterly and annual returns to the Supporting People Administering Authority
- periodic Supporting People Service Reviews to establish compliance

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with the core service objectives

- periodic Supporting People Contract Monitoring meetings
- assessment/compliance with the Quality Assessment Framework
- reporting to Signpost Care Partnership's Board in the Performance Information Pack.

4.12 Training

The Associations will ensure staff have appropriate training with regard to the support services that are available and how to use them. It is the aim that all relevant staff will be trained to take the most appropriate and effective action in all circumstances. The training will include:

- where appropriate, detailed training of the current Support Contract Policy and related procedures as part of the planned induction programme for new staff
- ensuring best practice, new legislation and case law is disseminated to relevant staff and is communicated effectively by either service area team meetings, Operational Management Team briefings, legal briefings or the internal intranet
- identifying on-going training needs and arranging appropriate training, as required, for staff, residents and Board members.

4.13 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

This policy has been developed to ensure the Associations provide equality of access and service delivery and includes:

- ensuring that no customer is disadvantaged irrespective of their race, gender (including gender reassignment), religion or belief, colour, ethnic or national origin, sexual orientation, marital status, age, disability, or social position in accordance with Spectrum Housing Group Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- ensuring specific communication or support requirements and equal access to the service is available
- identifying and addressing any inequality of access to the service

4.14 Equality Impact Assessment

This policy has had an equality impact assessment that has concluded that

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this policy does not discriminate either directly or indirectly and does not disadvantage any individual or group.

4.15 Responsible Officers

The Divisional Director Housing Services, Signpost Housing Association, and the Divisional Director Support Services, Signpost Care Partnerships will be responsible for monitoring and implementing this policy.

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