

WEAR VALLEY DISTRICT COUNCIL

VULNERABLE PERSONS STRATEGY

**FINAL VERSION
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Terms explained

Term	Explanation
Accommodation-based Service	An accommodation – based service is one where the support service and staff providing that support are linked to a particular property.
Chaotic lifestyle	People for whatever reason, find it difficult to cope with everyday life. That prevents them from establishing a stable routine which can manifest itself in a number of ways such as homelessness, misuse of drugs, alcohol and mental health problems.
Client Group	A term used to describe people with similar needs for support. A person may fit into more than one group.
Commissioning Body	The Commissioning Body oversees and guides Supporting People in Wear Valley. It includes representatives from all seven district councils, probation, health and voluntary organisations.
Contract	The contract is an agreement between Wear Valley District Council and those providing services for us.
Cross Authority Issues	Matters related to services that cross our boundaries into neighbouring authorities.
Floating Support Services	A support service which is linked to a particular property, but can be delivered anywhere.
HIA	Home Improvement Agency. This is an organisation that helps disabled and vulnerable people maintain their homes by helping with repairs and improvements.
Housing Related Support Services	<p>Services that help people to continue living independently. These can include helping people to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage their money; • Develop skills to look after their home; • Liaise with social care, health, police and other professionals; • Understand client needs • Improve life skills • Promote independent living
Provider	Organisation providing housing – related support services. This may include Registered Social Landlords, voluntary groups, local authorities and private companies.
QAF	The quality assessment framework is a set of objectives agreed by the ODPM. This is used by service providers to assess their performance against national standards e.g.

	health and safety support planning and protection from abuse. It is a tool for providers to ensure continuous improvement.
Registered care homes	A care home that provides accommodation together with nursing and personal care.
Statutory homeless	<p>A statutory homeless person is someone with nowhere to live, has not made themselves intentionally homeless, has a local connection to the area served by the authority and falls into a priority need category.</p> <p>The priority need categories are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a pregnant women or person with children or someone they might be expected to live with; • a person who is homeless or threatened to be homeless because of fire, flood or other disaster; • a person vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or physical disability; • a person who is vulnerable as a result of having been in local authority care or fostering, having been in the armed forces or having been in prison; • a person aged 16 – 17 who isn't under the care of social services; • a person under the age of 21 who is being cared for at any time after the age of 16; and a • person fleeing domestic violence.
Supporting People Programme	Supporting People is a partnership programme that was set up in April 2003 to monitor the quality of existing housing – related support services for vulnerable people and to plan what needs to be done to meet their needs.
Vulnerable adults	The term vulnerable adults, describes people who, for a variety of reasons, need extra support to live in the community.

Chapter 1 – Executive summary

1.1 Introduction

This chapter is a summary of Wear Valley Vulnerable person's strategy. Each heading is explained in more detail in the main document.

The document explains our priorities and how we will achieve them. It gives direction to those who provide housing and support and also demonstrates to our partners where and how we can work together to achieve common aims.

1.2 The vision in Wear Valley

We believe that providing housing – related support is important for many vulnerable people so they can continue to live independently in the community and not need specialist care.

'Vulnerable adults' describes people who, for a variety of reasons need extra support to live in the community. The (ODPM) has put together a list of those we should treat as vulnerable adults. Although we cover each of the groups in this strategy we have chosen to group some together where they have shared issues. For example marginalised groups, which include women escaping domestic violence, travellers, rough sleepers and people who misuse substances.

We want to give people real choices in where they live and what support they receive. We want to work with other professionals to make sure they stay independent, and most of all provide quality services which meets people's needs and provides value for money.

Chapter 2 – Strategic relevance

2 To decide whether any service is necessary we needed to understand what it was doing for individual groups as well as how it contributed to local and national initiatives and targets.

2.1 We also worked with the Supporting People (ALA) teams and agreed what we should do for some groups, especially those most likely to move across authority boundaries.

2.2 Although this helped us understand the needs of individual groups, it did not tell us how to achieve our main priorities and the main priorities of the governments Supporting People Programme.

To help us do this we looked:

- at what floating support services were required to enable people to stay in their own homes for longer periods of time.
- At the council's sheltered housing stock to decide whether we needed it all and what other options were available.

2.3 In putting the together the strategy information taken from other sources has been used including:

- the five year Supporting People Strategy;
- the results of service reviews ;
- service reviews carried out by Supporting People for example the council's Community Alarm service and the council's Tenancy Support Service;
- The council's Housing Strategy and business plan;

2.4 It is always a challenge to find the most appropriate ways of involving those using our services when putting together a strategy. In Wear Valley we have used a range of different ways to take customers views into account.

- We have gathered feedback about existing services through interviews with Individual's and through group meetings and questionnaires.
- We have listened to our customers and used the information to change the way in which we deliver our services.
- Most importantly we have listened to staff and taken their views seriously.

Shared information, supported by well thought out protocols for its use, provides a significant resource for planning purposes as well as underpinning more effective service delivery.

3. Chapter 3 - Marginalised groups

This chapter covers the following groups:

- Domestic violence;
- Travellers;
- Rough sleepers
- People who misuse substances, including alcohol and drugs

“Marginalised” is a broad term used to describe all of these people. The main challenge in meeting the needs of marginalised people is the fundamental difference that exists between statutory and non statutory responsibilities. Because councils have no legal responsibility for any of these groups, in the past services have mainly been provided by voluntary groups.

3.1 Domestic Violence

The impact of domestic violence is enormous. A large proportion of reported crime involves domestic violence. Over the last few years the realisation of domestic violence has hit home as a result, housing strategies, and community safety strategies recognise the importance of providing services to victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence services help stop people becoming homeless by providing housing to those escaping domestic violence. One in four women and one in six men will suffer domestic violence at some point in their lives. Those looking for help often go out of immediate area, so there needs to be a cross over between authorities.

3.2 Aims for domestic violence services

To provide:

- Immediate access to good quality safe emergency housing and support;
- Good quality childcare, so victims can go to work if they want to;
- Access to health, and social care and educational services;
- Move on accommodation with the appropriate support, as soon as possible after entering emergency accommodation.

In Wear Valley we offer emotional and practical support for individuals who are or who have suffered domestic violence. The service is fully confidential and provides appointments, or drop in and outreach facilities.

Awareness talks to organisations and community groups can be arranged.

Cross – authority planning for domestic violence services needs to take account of several regional and local strategies This includes the:

- national Domestic violence policy;

- (sub) regional housing strategies; and
- county and district homelessness strategies.
- Supporting People Strategy

3.3 Supporting People Strategy

The council is committed to working in partnership with Durham County Council ALA Supporting People Team to agree Supporting People strategies and delivery mechanisms for support services.

The ODPM require that all ALA are members of a Cross Authority Group, and have, identified other neighbouring authorities which they consider to have cross – boundary needs and issues.

In County Durham the Durham and Tees Valley Cross Authority group was Established in 2004 and consists of the County of Durham and five unitary local Authorities, Darlington, Hartlepool, Middlesborough, Redcar and Cleveland and Stockton-on-Tees who have formed a natural alliance to develop services within the Durham and Tees Valley area.

The main aim for cross-authority joint working is to identify the services people need, and to make sure the people requiring those services do so wherever they live. This includes planning and funding of future service provision and will also take on board issues arising in the North East Region.

3.4 Travellers

There are currently no specialist housing related support services funded via Supporting People. However, work has begun with the Durham County Council Traveller Liaison Services and Welfare Rights Service and the Durham & Darlington Racial Equality Council, to identify whether there are specialist needs which are currently not being met by mainstream services.

Initial discussions between Durham County Council ALA and local authority housing departments through the Homeless Action Partnership has taken place in an attempt to establish the level of need in relation to housing and homelessness.

The ODPM is currently reviewing existing policy and practice and a role has been identified for Supporting People programmes to meet the needs of this group.

Issues identified so far fall into 4 general categories:

- The needs of people in official sites
- Illegal / unofficial temporary sites and encampments
- Seasonal nomads (those who move into bricks and mortar accommodation through the winter months.
- Interaction with settled community.

In County Durham, levels of need and development of support services in the future will require further developmental work with all stakeholders. In Wear Valley the Council are committed in taking this work forward as travellers/gypsies form County Durham's largest ethnic minority, with around 300 travellers currently living on the permanent sites in the County. These sites are constantly full which results in significant problems of illegal encampments. For people on those illegal encampments their situation falls within the Homeless legislation in Wear Valley we have already re-housed a number of travellers via this route.

Historically and culturally, this large ethnic community has been marginalised from mainstream services so it will require joint commissioning of highly specialised services, building on existing provision, to meet their needs.

3.5 Rough Sleepers

Although a very limited number of people are reported to have been living rough in Wear Valley we have taken a proactive approach in this area and have made provision for short term emergency accommodation at Dellside House providing four bed spaces with the potential of extending this to five. (See Homeless Section).

3.6 Substance Misuse

Drug and alcohol related problems are common and widely misunderstood. Quite often people who abuse drugs and alcohol often have a range of other problems including mental health problems, suffer from poor health in general and are unemployed. This makes it difficult for them to cope with life. They find it difficult to secure accommodation in the first place and when they do they risk being evicted because of their problems.

In 2003 there were 350 people accessing the needle exchange service in Bishop Auckland alone. Currently there is limited accommodation – based or floating support provision specifically for people with drug problems. Stoneham Housing Association in partnership with the council provides a limited number of properties for this purpose. Suitable accommodation is a natural precursor to people accessing and maintaining treatment programmes.

Local drug treatment provision was seen as high quality but resources were too limited to cope with demand. In some areas of the county the lack of detoxification and rehabilitation provision and intensive supported accommodation were seen as significant gaps in provision.

Research undertaken by Drug Action Teams identified an unmet need of local services that enables individuals to remain in their own communities and existing support networks. The more vulnerable, chaotic and active drug users face potential exclusion from many services.

Recent information provided by the Drug Action Team in January 2005, indicates that there are as many as 2,800 people with serious substance misuse problems

in County Durham. Of those, around 500 are in urgent need of housing and housing related support at any one time.

There is a need to improve the understanding, awareness and training of housing providers in the needs of this client group to ensure that wherever possible they are working to an inclusive agenda.

Continued joint working with Supporting People Teams and Drug Action Teams during 2005/6 will identify the development and coordination of services to meet future need.

4. Chapter 4 Homelessness

Homelessness has had an increased profile on the government's agenda over the last two years. There is now a much greater emphasis on homelessness prevention, early intervention, and there is a move towards tackling homelessness in a much more co-ordinated and strategic manner than has been adopted in the past.

For some people, the causes of homelessness can be clear cut, such as losing an existing tenancy or experiencing a relationship breakdown. For others the reasons will be more complex, and for these people homelessness is not just a housing problem. Some homeless people have other difficulties and support needs, such as physical and mental health problems, problematic substance use, unemployment, histories of offending and chaotic lifestyles. These needs can be exacerbated by trauma of homelessness and difficulties accessing services when homeless. If levels of homelessness are to be permanently reduced, there is a need for a wide range of support and other preventive services for homeless people.

4.1 Wear Valley and Teesdale District Council Vision

Wear Valley and Teesdale District Council have produced a Homeless Strategy in partnership with Centrepoint for the dales locality.

The vision of the Strategy is:

To work in partnership to develop a homeless prevention culture that delivers a reduction in homelessness and alleviates the harmful effects of homelessness by improving services.

The main priorities outlined in the Strategy are:

- Improving the homelessness services delivered in both districts
- Identifying the support needs of homeless applicants
- Improving the temporary accommodation options in both districts
- Developing a co-ordinated housing advice service across the localities.
- To reduce the number of B&B accommodation used in the area

Both Wear Valley and Teesdale's housing strategies are in effect local plans to provide housing to the people of the districts. They include all types of housing both private and public. The strategies identify priorities for action and have historically been key documents in drawing in funding and partners for possible development.

4.2 **Positive outcomes**

Despite growing homeless pressures, It is quite clear since the introduction of the Governments Supporting People Programme that the Supporting People Team and service providers have grasped the opportunity to expand the range of housing related support services to address homelessness in County Durham. Initiatives in Wear Valley include:

- Teenage parents Floating Support (in partnership with Tees Valley Housing).
- Tenancy Support Service (Wear Valley Housing Services Department)
- Mental Health Floating Support in partnership with Stoneham Housing
- Substance misuse Floating Support in partnership with Stoneham Housing.
- Supported accommodation homeless young people Three Rivers Housing
- People with learning difficulties in partnership with Richmond Fellowship.
- The provision of emergency accommodation 4 bed spaces at Dellside House with the opportunity of increasing this to 5.
- Contribute to the implementation of the HARP Protocol (Housing and Returning Prisoners).
- Representation on the Homeless Action Partnership (HAP)

Key strengths include firm political and managerial support and a commitment to Prevent homelessness by achieving high levels of tenancy sustainment and low levels of repeat homelessness.

It is our long term aim and commitment to continue to work with partner agencies to improve services to all vulnerable people, develop and extend floating support schemes that will address homelessness within the Wear Valley and Teesdale District.

5. **Chapter 5 Older Persons Services**

The older population in County Durham is growing rapidly and as a proportion of the total population the numbers of people over 75 is set to show the greatest increase.

Data collected by Supporting People teams suggests that Co Durham has an exceptionally high provision of older person services. The older persons sector is the largest sector of accommodation-based housing-related support in the County. This includes sheltered housing and those properties that are provided specifically for older and disabled people.

The local authorities and registered social landlords provide the majority of sheltered housing, with the vast majority of Supporting People community alarm provision being in the social sector.

5.1 **Housing Care and Support Strategy for Older People**

In 2001 Durham County Council, the seven district councils and health authorities, commissioned Peter Fletcher Associates to develop a Housing, Care and Support strategy for older people in the County.

The aims of the strategy were to:

- Reduce the numbers of older people moving into long term care
- Increase the choices for housing care and support available to older people in each area.
- Develop a flexible range of services which meet the needs of older people now and in the future.
- Promote integrated working between housing, care and support services.
- Contribute to the delivery of Supporting People, National Service Framework for Older People in the future.
- Contribute to the Modernisation and Preventative Agendas.

There is overwhelming evidence that most older people prefer to remain in their own home or a supported housing setting and to live as independently as possible. This strategy has identified the infrastructure that can support and enable this by taking into account:

- The needs of the next generation of older people
- Equal opportunities and peoples different needs dependent upon gender, sexuality and disability
- Consider the needs of black and minority ethnic individuals
- The needs of people who care for those with care and support needs including partners and family members.

5.2 The strategic vision in Wear Valley is to:-

- “Improve the quality of life of vulnerable people in the district through a diverse range of needs led quality housing related services, which will enable people to live independently at home”.

5.3 **Homeline Warden Services**

Homeline was established in 1991 to provide high quality 24 hour 7 day a week Community Alarm service to elderly and vulnerable residents in the Wear Valley area. The 24 hour monitoring service is provided by Sedgefield Borough Council. The partnership agreement with S.B.C has been up and running for 1 year and has proved to be successful. Sedgefield Carelink service's are at the forefront of providing the Telecare Services. The partnership gives Wear Valley Council the opportunity to develop our own services in this field.

Our service provides emergency help to the elderly, disabled or to those who are vulnerable, or have special needs. Customers can choose from 3 different levels of service, each service allows anyone who is linked to the alarm system to Summon help immediately if an emergency situation arises. That person is trained to assess the situation and will take the appropriate action necessary.

5.4 **Service Level Agreement (S.L.A)**

In line with the governments Supporting People Programme and as part of the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) each customer receives a service standard agreement that sets out very clearly what:-

- Our Values, aims and Objectives are
- Standards to expect
- Agreed Services will be delivered and when and, how
- How the customer can help 'shape' the service – we will consult widely
- How to complain if a customer is not satisfied with the service they are receiving.
- The terms and conditions and obligations relating to the S.L.A

5.5 **Support Plans**

Each customer receives a support plan which is designed to meet the needs of each individual. From this we can identify the type of service which will be best suitable for their needs. Support plans are reviewed every six months to take into consideration of any change of circumstances that may have occurred.

5.6 **Performance Management**

We have a robust Performance Management system in place, which clearly sets out what our performance targets are. These are monitored on a monthly basis, discussed with local teams at monthly team briefings with the appropriate action being taken should performance slip. They are also reported to Departmental Management Team on a quarterly basis.

5.7 **Assistive Technology**

Telecare is the continuous, automatic and remote monitoring of real time emergencies and lifestyle changes over time in order to manage the risks associated with independent living.

By building on the existing infrastructure of the Community Alarm service, an ideal framework can be provided on which to build additional services utilising current technologies. Looking at how various smart sensors and intelligent monitoring systems can flag up problems or crisis situations and thus automatically raise an alert at the local community alarm control centre where staff will then initiate a response.

This in turn necessitates different response procedures which hold implications for all partner agencies. This may mean the need for new service provision and

possibly new roles and will need to be integrated into current mainstream services.

Through the evaluation of pilot schemes, Co Durham has earned the reputation as a pathfinder in the field of Telecare and has been able to influence the products that have already, or will become, commercially available in the near future. Assistive type technologies such as:-

- Automatic door openers
- Night wandering devices
- Flood Sensors
- Fall Sensors
- Keysafe
- Pill dispenser
- Carbon Monoxide / Gas Sensors
- Tele-Medicine
- Information and communication technologies to help overcome social isolation.

A positive feed back has been accrued both from service users and professional staff.

As this type of work demands close inter-agency partnership working and the key to success will be the transition from piloting the technologies to making it available as a mainstream service option.

Telecare has the potential not only to achieve cost savings, particularly in the management of acute conditions, but also as a key component in the drive for the districts of Wear Valley and Teesdale to allow people the choice of staying longer in their own homes. Patient autonomy will be increased in that patients will play a more active role in managing their own conditions.

Negotiations have begun with Social Care and Health looking at the possibility of a pilot scheme in Wear Valley to monitor elderly people with early dementia.

5.8 Working in Partnership to Provide Support at Home

Wear Valley are committed to working in partnership to deliver a range of other services aimed at supporting people at home.

These include:-

- Home Improvement Agency (H.I.A)
- S.H.A.R.P(Sedgefield Home Assessment and Rehabilitation Partnership)
- Luncheon Clubs
- Working with Police Community Safety (bogus callers awareness)
- Social Care Direct.
- Supporting People Partnership

5.9 Value Improvement Programme Project

Durham and Districts Supporting People Partnership are working with providers, partner agencies and commissioners to re-model community alarm and warden services across County Durham in order to provide more flexible and better targeted services with better outcomes for service users. The intended outcome will be the achievement of increased and consistent access to services via a re-contracting process that will feature detailed service specifications with explicit service and pricing structures. Merging or re-modelling of bandings will be a feature of the process.

The intention in the longer term is to extend joint commissioning with Social Care and Health and the Primary Care Trusts to develop a wider range of assistive technologies to include telecare and telemedicine services.

The scope and scale of the project will be influenced by the cost implications of the technology currently used, the technology required for the future and the transition costs involved in the change process.

6.0 Chapter 6 Conclusion

The coming years will see major changes in the development of support services for vulnerable and older people's housing. Continued financial support and funding via local government under the Supporting People programme, can expect improved pathways year on year.

Wear Valley's framework and development plans contained within this strategy will ensure that the vision of effective services will be shaped around and informed by the needs and preferences of its service users.