



## Supported Housing Scrutiny Review

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## 1.0 Foreword

- 1.1 The Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee identified the issue of supported housing as one of serious concern. The lack of regulation provides the potential for vulnerable adults to be exploited and not be provided with the support they require. As a result of this key concern being identified, the Committee resolved that a review panel was required to take a deep-dive into this issue to try and come up with ways in which the sector could be improved in Blackpool.
- 1.2 The Review Panel gathered a lot of information in order to form its conclusions, and as a result of the interim report, Blackpool standards for adults and young people have been developed. This is the first step in setting out what we want for our residents. These standards might not be enforceable until a change in regulation but with the tireless efforts of our officers, providers will be encouraged and supported to attain these standards ensuring that those residing in this type of accommodation receive the help they need. It is hoped that the Council will formally adopt these standards and continue to lobby MPs and Government for the changes to regulation so desperately needed.
- 1.3 I would like to thank the key officers that participated in this review for their knowledge, input and dedication, namely Kate Aldridge, Vikki Piper and Louise Jones, and their teams for carrying out the work on the supported housing pilot scheme which has demonstrated what can be achieved. I would also like to thank all of the Members that participated in this review for their time and contribution, which has resulted in something that can provide real change and improvement for Blackpool residents.

Councillor Adrian Hutton  
Chairman, Supported Housing Scrutiny Review Panel

## 2.0 Summary of Recommendations

	<b>Timescale</b>
<b>Recommendation One</b>  That the Supported Housing Scrutiny Review Panel endorses the Supported Housing Standards for Adults and separate Youth Standards and Charter for adoption by the Executive.	
<b>Recommendation Two</b>  That the Council continues to lobby the Government to introduce regulation or legislation to allow the Council to enforce its approach to supported housing as set out in the agreed standards.	

### 3.0 Background Information

- 3.1 The Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee first received a report on the provision of supported housing on 7 January 2020. The report provided an overview of supported housing in the town, defining supported housing as any housing scheme where accommodation is provided alongside care (not necessarily commissioned social care), support or supervision to help people live as independently as possible in the community. This includes:
- Older people with support needs
  - People with learning and physical disabilities
  - Individuals and families at risk of or recovering from homelessness
  - People recovering from drug or alcohol dependency
  - Offenders and ex-offenders
  - Vulnerable young people (such as care leavers or teenage parents)
  - People with mental ill health
  - People at risk of domestic abuse.
- 3.2 The Committee learnt during the course of the meeting that supported housing was funded through housing benefit, that there had been an increase in the number of supported accommodation schemes in the area over the previous few years, that due to the nature of the schemes they could attract very high rents and service charges which landlords expected to be met through housing benefit and that schemes did not always attract full subsidy from the Department of Work and Pensions and could therefore be costly to the local authority.
- 3.3 Key concerns raised during the meeting included the cost of supported housing, with the average weekly rent per tenant varying between £79.90 and £355.58 per week; the lack of regulation of providers – although national standards for supported housing had been produced they were guidance and not legally enforceable; and that vulnerable people with mixed and sometimes conflicting needs were often placed together with support that was not appropriate to meet their needs. The Committee therefore determined that a scrutiny review be established to further investigate supported housing and to invite representatives of the Tourism, Economy and Communities Scrutiny Committee be invited to attend to provide a joined up approach.
- 3.4 This review related to the following priority of the Council:
- Communities: Creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.

## 4.0 Methodology

- 4.1 The Panel held three formal meetings where they gathered evidence and began to form their conclusions and recommendations during these meetings.

Details of the meetings are as follows:

Date	Attendees	Purpose
10 November 2020	<p>Councillors Burdess (in the Chair), Hunter, O'Hara, Mrs Scott, Walsh and Wing</p> <p>Vikki Piper, Acting Head of Housing</p> <p>Councillor Neal Brookes, Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform</p> <p>Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager</p>	<p>To receive details regarding the Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government pilot scheme for supported housing in Blackpool.</p>
3 March 2021	<p>Councillor Burdess (in the Chair), Galley, O'Hara, Hunter, Hutton, Mitchell, D Scott, Mrs Scott, Walsh and Wing</p> <p>Kate Aldridge, Head of Commissioning and Corporate Delivery</p> <p>Vikki Piper, Acting Head of Housing</p> <p>Louise Jones,</p> <p>Councillor Jo Farrell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health</p> <p>Councillor Neal Brookes, Cabinet Member for Housing and Welfare Reform</p>	<p>To receive an update on the progress of the pilot scheme, an overview of the current situation regarding supported housing in Blackpool, the existing threshold and current criteria for supported housing, the potential vulnerabilities of adults in supported housing, the impact on anti-social behaviour, the cost to the Council and the current role of the Council.</p>
17 March 2021	<p>Supported Housing Scrutiny Review Interim report submitted to the Executive for approval.</p>	
9 November 2021	<p>Councillors Hutton (in the Chair), O'Hara, Jackson, D Scott and Mrs Scott</p> <p>Kate Aldridge, Head of Commissioning and Corporate Delivery</p> <p>Vikki Piper, Head of Housing</p> <p>Lance Postings, Benefits Manager</p> <p>Sharon Davis, Scrutiny Manager</p>	<p>To consider the progress made on the recommendations in the interim report namely the development of the standards for supported housing, plus an update following the conclusion of the pilot scheme.</p>

## 5.0 Detailed Findings and Recommendations

### 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This final report follows on from the interim report submitted to the Executive in March 2021 when the following recommendations were approved:

To recommend to the Executive that Blackpool Council establishes its own standards for what supported housing should look like in the town and that scrutiny plays an active role in developing these standards.

To recommend to the Executive that the Council writes a letter to the local MPs setting out the key issues relating to supported housing in the town and requests that they lobby Government for new legislation that allows for more control over the sector.

That the Scrutiny Panel reconvenes in due course to consider the issue of 'out of area placements' further.

- 5.1.2 The final report reiterates the findings set out in the interim report and also adds the detail of the final meeting of the Panel when the draft standards were presented and considered by Members and the response of the MPs to the recommendation to write to them regarding the concerns raised during the review.

### 5.2 Recap of the interim report

- 5.2.1 The Review Panel was established comprising members of the Adult Social Care and Health Scrutiny Committee and three members of the Tourism, Economy and Community Scrutiny Committee due to the cross-cutting nature of the issue. It was originally scheduled to meet during March 2020, however, due to the Covid-19 pandemic the meeting was postponed and the Review Panel eventually held its first meeting in November 2020. At this first meeting, Members were informed that the Council had successfully bid to participate in a pilot scheme related to supported housing with the then Ministry of Communities, Housing and Local Government. As part of the pilot, the authority would be looking to use the existing tools, powers and regulations in order to try and influence supported housing developments and gain some control over the support provided to residents and where the provision was located. This would then create an evidence base to be submitted to Government to allow them to see what worked and what might need changing in order to gain control of the issue.
- 5.2.2 During the first Panel meeting Members delved deeper into the concerns raised that vulnerable people were not receiving the support they needed and it was considered that the pilot scheme would offer an increased level of scrutiny on quality standards. Concern was also raised regarding the high levels of supported housing in some wards where former, large holiday accommodation was situated. The prevalence on particular roads or areas often resulted in high levels of anti-social behaviour which affected local residents and could have a detrimental impact on the wider population and it was noted that the pilot aimed to address this issue. Planning and legal advice over the control and location of supported housing was also being considered as a key part of the pilot.

- 5.2.3 The Review Panel met for a second time in March 2021 to consider a number of aspects of supported housing in more detail including the existing thresholds and current criteria to be met, how risks and vulnerabilities of people in the accommodation were identified, the cost to the Council and the current and potential future roles of the Council.
- 5.2.4 Key areas of discussion during the meeting included the difference between matched and unmatched supported accommodation, the extent to which tenants were known to Adult Social Care, the potential exploitation of vulnerable adults, an update on the pilot scheme and the large number of people placed in supported accommodation from outside of the Blackpool area.
- 5.2.5 Members considered that despite the fact that they would currently be unenforceable, work should begin on the Blackpool standards for supported accommodation. The Blackpool standards could go over and above the national standards as appropriate to set out the Council's aspiration for support and accommodation in the town. There could be separate standards dependent on the tenant and support required. It was noted that during the pilot process, it had been suggested that local standards would be appropriate and the Panel considered that Scrutiny should have an active involvement in their development.
- 5.2.6 It was considered that the key change required to ensure improvement in supported housing provision was for stronger legislation to be introduced in order to allow the Council to take action on providers to make improvements and compel them to engage with the Council more thoroughly in order to identify whether the scheme was appropriate for the town in the first instance. Stronger legislation could give the Council more influence over location, type as well as quality of provision.
- 5.2.7 A final key area of concern identified during the meeting was the high number of vulnerable people being brought in from out of area by providers in order to take places within supported housing in the town. Concern was raised that some other local authorities might be aware of the practice and appointed agencies to locate vulnerable and difficult to place adults in Blackpool, resulting in a person outside of their home town with no local connections and therefore increasing their vulnerability. It was noted that in 2018, 84% of new housing benefit claimants for all types of accommodation in Blackpool had been made by adults from out of the area. Members considered that this issue required further investigation to determine whether any action could be taken in order to influence future placements.
- 5.2.8 The Review Panel agreed that in order to progress with the recommendations identified as quickly as possible that an interim report of the Panel be submitted for consideration by the Executive with a further meeting established in due course to consider the outstanding issues.
- 5.3 Consideration of the draft standards**
- 5.3.1 The Supported Housing Scrutiny Review Panel was reconvened on 9 November 2021 in order to consider the suite of documents that had been developed following the first two meetings of the Panel and the outstanding issue of out of area placements. The comments and concerns raised by Members in previous meetings had been used to



shape the work and Officers had worked closely with young people in order to co-produce the standards of supported housing for young people. The documents considered were as follows:

- Quality Standards for Adults
- Quality Standards for Young People
- Charter of Rights Young People
- Charter Mark Young People
- Sufficiency and Market Position Statement (Needs Assessment)
- Costing Report

- 5.3.2 The Panel was informed that the pilot scheme had concluded and the evidence gathered passed to the Government for consideration. The learning from the pilot had been used in the development of the draft quality standards and a number of key processes had been introduced. A new multi-disciplinary team was providing a single point of contact for new providers, existing supported housing schemes had been reviewed to compare what had been promised by the scheme with what was actually being delivered and a team of young inspectors had been assembled. Enforcement visits had also been undertaken where appropriate.
- 5.3.3 A clear market position statement had been developed in order to inform of the requirements for supported housing in Blackpool. It was important to note that good quality supported tenancies helped people hugely and could produce fantastic outcomes. There was no desire to remove the providers that produced great work and a positive experience for people.
- 5.3.4 Two different sets of quality standards had been produced, one set for adults and the other for young people. This was due to differences in requirement and enforceability in the youth market. The supported housing market for adults was larger but as yet there had been no changes with regards to the introduction of any new legislation and the standards had been developed to identify best practice. A self-assessment toolkit had been developed to allow providers to measure for themselves whether they were meeting the standards set out with the expectation they would be adhered to. If and when new legislation was introduced the standards could be amended to include any additional powers. This differed from the sector for young people which was commissioned by the Council, ensuring that there was more ability to make changes when standards were not being met. Whilst co-producing the standards for supported housing for young people, the young people had determined that they also wished to introduce a charter mark and have a role in developing such a mark.
- 5.3.5 The outcomes of the pilot included some reduction in spend mainly due to the prevention of new provision. There had been 23 enquiries made during the pilot scheme for new provision, the majority of which had been prevented. Other outcomes included better working relationships with many providers, a best practice model of young inspectors which had been utilised in a number of settings and a network of intelligence across partners. The Panel discussed the sustainability of the processes put in place during the pilot when further budget reductions must be met and it was noted that many processes could be continued through the passion and determination of staff to ensure supported housing was monitored.

- 5.3.6 The specific issue of out of area placements was raised as an outstanding issue from previous discussions. It was noted that the issue had been that vulnerable adults from a wide geographical area were being placed in supported housing in Blackpool when they had no prior links to the town. This then had an impact on other service provision required to support the individuals. It was noted that due to the impact of the work carried out to date and the general reduction in new supported housing schemes, that there had also been a positive impact on this specific issue. It was recognised that there remained legacy issues from those schemes established prior to the pilot.
- 5.3.6 Members considered the suite of documents in detail and commended the work that had gone into the development of the documents and highlighted the importance of having the legislation in place to give additional strength to enforcing the standards required by the Council. The Panel agreed to endorse the documents for adoption by the Council.
- 5.4 Lobbying for formal regulation**
- 5.4.1 The interim report contained a recommendation to write to the MPs for Blackpool which had been completed. It was reported that both MPs had responded positively to the concerns raised by the Scrutiny Panel. Members determined that formal regulation was still required and requested that the MPs be contacted again in order to further highlight the legislative changes needed and seek their support. The meeting could also be used to set out the contents of the draft standards in Blackpool, the impact on residents when supported housing was not run adequately and the consequences of failings in support of residents.

### **Recommendation One**

**That the Supported Housing Scrutiny Review Panel endorses the Supported Housing Standards for Adults and separate Youth Standards and Charter for adoption by the Executive.**

### **Recommendation Two**

**That the Council continues to lobby the Government to introduce regulation or legislation to allow the Council to enforce its approach to supported housing as set out in the agreed standards.**

## **6.0 Financial and Legal Considerations**

### **6.1 Financial**

- 6.1.1 There will be an ongoing cost of continued challenge and scrutiny of support housing providers to the Council as set out in the report. Officers aim to ensure the legacy of the pilot is continued and sustainable.

### **6.2 Legal**

- 6.2.1 There are no regulations as yet in place for supported housing, the recommendation supports the continued lobbying of the Government for formal regulation of services and providers.

**Supported Housing Scrutiny Action Plan**

Recommendation	Cabinet Member's Comments	Rec Accepted by Executive?	Target Date for Action	Lead Officer	Committee Update	Notes
<p><b>Recommendation One</b></p> <p><b>That the Supported Housing Scrutiny Review Panel endorses the Supported Housing Standards for Adults and separate Youth Standards and Charter for adoption by the Executive.</b></p>	<p>The Cabinet Member agrees with the recommendation and has no further comments to make.</p>					
<p><b>That the Council continues to lobby the Government to introduce regulation or legislation to allow the Council to enforce its approach to supported housing as set out in the agreed standards.</b></p>	<p>The Cabinet Member agrees with the recommendation and has no further comments to make.</p>					