



HONEYCOMB GROUP

Vulnerability & Reasonable Adjustments Policy



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Who's this for?	Honeycomb Group – Staffs Housing; Concrete; Glow; Revival
Version control – document status/implementation date	Final V.2 June 2024
Consultation with stakeholders – please list	Leadership Group; Exec DoO; Exec D S&W; Head of Homelessness, Housing & Complex Needs; Head of Domestic Abuse
Equality impact assessment if applicable & date	Completed & approved 27 June 2024
Data Protection Assessment (by DPO) & date	Completed 25 June 2024
Date created	May 2024
Last revised/updated	New policy
Review required	3 years from approval date
Owner (Executive Lead)	Executive Director of Operations
Approved by	Executive Team 19 June 2024

1.Introduction

The Honeycomb Group recognises that some customers may be vulnerable for a number of reasons. We believe in the principle of accessibility for all and are committed to supporting customers who are experiencing vulnerabilities, both to access the Honeycomb Group services and to get the support they need to sustain their tenancies. The Honeycomb Group provides a range of additional support for vulnerable people and those facing exceptional circumstances. We understand that, to do this properly, we need to be consistent in our approach and to make sure that every Honeycomb Group colleague who works with vulnerable customers has the information and tools to provide appropriate support.

2.Objectives & Scope

Being vulnerable does not reduce a tenant's responsibility to fulfil the conditions of their Tenancy Agreement. However, we recognise that some tenants will require additional support in meeting their obligations.

This policy provides guidance in relation to vulnerability and explains the approach we will take when providing **accommodation and services** to vulnerable customers. This policy does not relate to customers, vulnerable or otherwise who receive support services only such as a Revival customer receiving wellbeing support in their own home in the community or a Glow victim survivor receiving recovery services.

Throughout this policy, the term 'customers' refers to The Honeycomb Group tenants (sole/joint), leaseholders/shared owners, and household members. This could be a Staffs Housing tenant or a Concrete or Glow customer in our 24/7 schemes or refuge/safe accommodation or semi-independent and dispersed accommodation.

The objectives of this policy are to:

- Provide a high-quality service that always considers vulnerability when making decisions.
- Ensure The Honeycomb Group homes and housing management services both recognise the potential effects of vulnerability and provide a responsive service that takes vulnerability into account, limiting instances of tenancy failure.
- Assist vulnerable customers in accessing additional services that they may need in an approachable, responsive, and consistent way, and to report issues.
- Identify potentially vulnerable people at an early stage to enable preventative action and targeted support.
- Ensure vulnerabilities are recorded in an effective and appropriate way and keep this up to date.
- Make safeguarding referrals whenever needed, including to commissioned Domestic Abuse (DA) services and/or statutory services as required and in accordance with the DA policy.
- Provide consistent and clear information to enable customers and residents to understand the Honeycomb Group policies and procedures, and who to contact to answer queries; and

- Support the development of sustainable communities by delivering tailored support services to vulnerable customers, either directly or via a suitably recognised third party organisation.

This policy focuses on customers who are vulnerable but have capacity to make their own decisions. If a customer has been assessed as lacking, or is believed to lack, capacity to make decisions, we will work with their appointed legal representatives.

3. Defining Vulnerability

For The Honeycomb Group, a vulnerable customer is:

Someone who is experiencing difficulties with everyday living, making them unable to remain independent, unable to manage their tenancy without additional support and/or potentially disadvantaged when accessing the Honeycomb Group services.

It is not possible to list every situation or circumstance where a customer could be vulnerable, nor whether the vulnerability is temporary or permanent. However, the table (shown below) provides an overview of important vulnerability drivers, with examples of potential vulnerability indicators shown under each one:

4. Table: The four drivers of vulnerability

Health	Life events	Resilience	Capability
Physical disability	Bereavement	High levels of debt	Unable to manage finances
Severe or long term illness	Domestic abuse (including economic control)	Inadequate or erratic income	Low levels of literacy or numeracy skills
Hearing or visual impairment	Experience of anti-social behaviour or neighbourhood harassment	Food poverty	Language barriers
Mental health condition or disability	Relationship breakdown		Poor or non-existent digital skills
Addiction or substance misuse	Caring responsibilities		Learning difficulties
	Change in circumstances (for example, leaving care, seeking asylum or protection from human trafficking or modern slavery)		No or low access to help and support

This definition recognises that vulnerability can be a changeable state and may be influenced by multiple factors and experiences, for example, age,

disability, bereavement, mental health, domestic violence, and poor financial health. It is the interaction of these factors that determines how vulnerable a person is at any point in time and how much additional support they may require to sustain their tenancy.

5. Identifying Vulnerability

Vulnerability can be identified in a number of ways:

- Application forms that include a vulnerability checklist – for example, a Local Authority Housing Register, Homelessness Prevention Form, Disabled Facilities Grant, and private sector leasing scheme.
- During the initial tenancy sign-up or in the case of Glow or Concrete customers during the initial referral and assessment stage (the nature of services provided by Glow and Concrete means that in most/all cases customers are vulnerable and in need of specialist support)
During other home visits – for example, noting instances of anti-social behaviour, harassment, or domestic violence, hoarding self-neglect or mental health issues.
- Over the phone.
- Notification from relatives, neighbours or friends.
- During daily calls or weekly visits for customers.
- If a contractor has concerns that someone may require some extra support or there are safeguarding concerns; and
- Notifications from professionals, such as Occupational Therapists, Care Managers or GP.

6. Acting on Vulnerability

When a customer is identified as vulnerable, we will:

- Record the nature of the vulnerability securely on our housing management or other relevant case management system, together with any particular communication or access needs and whether there is anyone with delegated authority to speak to us on the residents' behalf, such as a care or support worker.
- Check the system to note any vulnerabilities when any future contact with the customer is made, to ensure we always act in an appropriate way in response to the type of vulnerability

- Respect privacy at all times and follow our procedures to ensure that appropriate safeguarding is in place.
- Liaise with relevant advice and support agencies that may also be working with the customer to resolve any housing issues, including making any necessary safeguarding referrals.
- Undertake regular reviews to make sure the information we have is up to date and accurate.

7. Vulnerability and reasonable adjustments

When we identify a customer with vulnerabilities, and where reasonable adjustments are required, the support we offer can include:

- Providing information in other formats in agreement with the customer to ensure we always use the most appropriate means of communication – for example, translations, interpreters, or signers, as well as audio recordings, Braille, and large-print documents.
- Allowing more time for the customer to get to the telephone or door.
- Considering vulnerability in our repairs offer and prioritising customers with health or vulnerability issues.
- Working with customers to put direct debits in place for housing benefit/Universal Credit payments, which would be paid directly to the Honeycomb Group.
- Considering the needs of household members in the event of a tenant's death, including potential to grant discretionary succession where there are vulnerability issues;
- Actively working with Local Authorities to support the provision of aids and adaptations in the home through existing funding arrangements.
- Supporting customers to prevent or reduce debt, manage their money, and help to maximise income.

8. Supporting policies, procedures, and processes

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Aids & Adaptations Policy
- Data Protection Policy

- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Safeguarding Adults Policy
- Safeguarding Children Policy

9.Data Protection and Confidentiality

For processing, storing and sharing the personal data associated with this policy, we will ensure that it is carried out in accordance with current data protection legislation (UK GDPR and Data Protection Act 2018).

10. Review

This policy will usually be reviewed every 3 years, or as a result of feedback obtained, internal/external audits or change in legislation/regulatory requirements.

June 2024