

# Vulnerable Residents Policy

## 1.0 Purpose and Scope

This policy sets out Clarion's approach to assisting vulnerable residents to try to ensure they can access the services they need.

This policy relates to residents who are vulnerable but have capacity to make their own decisions.

Our Mental Capacity Act policy otherwise applies if a resident has been assessed as lacking or is believed to lack capacity to make the decision in question.

This policy focuses on what Clarion can offer as enhanced housing services to residents identified as being vulnerable residents, and tries to ensure that the right services are being delivered whether this is by Clarion or from other statutory and voluntary services.

## 2.0 Policy Objectives

The objective of this policy is to ensure that our vulnerable residents receive the support they require in order to sustain their tenancy and live as independently as possible in their home. To achieve this, Clarion will:

- Use all available information to identify vulnerable residents;
- Identify support needs and make appropriate referrals to our own enhanced housing services, including tenancy sustainment, community investment, and financial inclusion.
- Refer to statutory agencies and other external partner support agencies where appropriate
- Make safeguarding referrals whenever needed, and ensure we record this, and the outcomes of these referrals (if known)
- Make sure that all information is regularly reviewed and managed in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## 3.0 Defining and Identifying Vulnerability

We note there are different definitions of vulnerability in different legislation depending on the issues and circumstances in question.

The Repairs Contact Centre will assess vulnerability at the first point of contact by confirming:-

- Are you over 75? and/or
- Do you receive support from another organisation? and/or
- Do you receive a Personal Budget for care, support or health?

From these trigger questions we ascertain if enhanced services are required for the individual, or family.

Many of our staff work with residents that have additional needs, whether this is through an intensive housing service, support service, or tenancy sustainment service. Staff should note these needs can arise as a result of:-

- Mental health issues
- Learning difficulties
- Being over 75 years and frail
- Being unable to perform self-care tasks / significant daily tasks
- Partner/carers unable to provide support with current problems
- Severely impaired mobility and/or risk of falls
- Sensory impairment
- Severe physical health problems or a debilitating illness or disability
- Hate crime
- Domestic abuse
- Being a care leaver
- Being a young lone parent i.e. under 25
- No previous experience of successfully managing independent living
- Significant problems with finances/budgeting
- Being an asylum seeker or refugee
- Being an ex-offender
- Alcohol/Substance misuse
- A recent history of street homelessness
- Living alone and self-isolating or self-neglect
- Language/literacy difficulties

A resident's vulnerability may be identified by any member of Clarion staff who has contact with tenants; our contractors, from information provided by customers when they apply for housing or services, by self-referral or by an external agency or organisation.

#### **4.0 Policy Commitments**

We expect all of our staff to be aware of the possibility that a resident may be vulnerable e.g. from information they receive or from their own observations during routine work such as home visits or ASB interviews.

If they do suspect that someone is vulnerable they should discuss the support services offered by Clarion, or other local agencies with the resident and/or make a referral to Clarion tenancy sustainment services as appropriate.

Our caretakers and contractors often have a significant amount of contact with customers in the provision of their services, and where they become aware of a vulnerable resident they should raise this with their line manager who will liaise with the relevant Clarion team who will follow up the referral.

We will ensure that our staff are trained to recognise potential signs of vulnerability which may include:

- Engaging in antisocial behaviour as a result of mental health issues
- Being the victim of antisocial behaviour, harassment or domestic violence
- A detrimental change in the person's physical appearance
- A repeated failure to respond to correspondence or to answer the door when visited
- Hoarding or other behaviour which results in the person's home/ and or garden becoming damaged, neglected or otherwise unfit for occupation.
- Erratic rent payments and falling into arrears when the tenant previously had a good payment history.

## 5.0 Sign Ups of new tenants

At sign-up residents will have the opportunity to discuss the needs of any vulnerable household member. A referral to any enhanced housing service should then be offered such as tenancy sustainment, community investment, support via the welfare benefits teams, or referrals to external support services.

We will review any information on vulnerability received from other relevant agency, to assist in ensuring any housing offer is right for the individual or family, as a commitment to longer-term tenancy sustainment.

A prospective tenant deciding to enter a tenancy agreement must understand:

- The obligations to pay rent as a tenant, and to occupy and maintain the interior of the flat
- The landlord's obligations, e.g. to maintain the property
- That failure to keep to the terms of the tenancy agreement may mean they could be evicted

## 6.0 Communications

Clarion communicates with its customers in a variety of different ways:

- Email
- On line and via social media
- Phone
- Text
- Face to face in the tenants home,
- Letters

Documents can be made available in other languages, braille, large print and audio and all customers can also ask that correspondence is sent to someone who will act on their behalf. Customers are asked to convey any communication difficulties when they meet staff but also at other opportunities during their tenancy. This ensures that we can communicate with our customers in the best way possible, tailored to their individual needs.

## 7.0 Requests for Service

Clarion staff may become aware of vulnerability when a resident makes a general request for a service. The staff member will discuss the services offered by Clarion and make a referral as appropriate.

When a resident contacts Clarion direct to report a repair, the contact centre call handler will confirm if there are any disabilities or support needs which should be taken into account. This will be recorded on the customer record so that the service can be delivered appropriately, aligned to the needs of the household. Our staff will have advance knowledge of any additional factors to consider when delivering the repairs service to the property.

## 8.0 Recording Vulnerability

Where a vulnerable resident has been identified and referred to the sustainment services, this will be recorded on the customer record so that staff can see if there are 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.

Safeguarding concerns will be raised with the relevant local authority. Clarion has separate policy and related processes for the safeguarding of adults and children. These documents give detail in how we identify and support vulnerable adults and children at risk, and ensure statutory agencies are involved immediately we have a concern.

## 9.0 Key Legislation and Regulatory Requirements

- The Homes and Communities Agency Regulatory Framework, sets out in the Tenancy Standard at paragraph 2.1.7 that registered providers policies must take into account the needs of those households who are vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness, including through the provision of tenancies which provide a reasonable degree of stability.
- Data Protection Act 1988 (“DPA”) – We will comply with our Data Protection Policy and Procedures.
- Mental Capacity Act 2005 - We will follow our Mental Capacity Procedure. We will liaise with the following persons who have legal authority to act on behalf of tenants who lack capacity e.g. persons with a:
  - Lasting Power of Attorney
  - Deputyship Order from the Court of Protection
  - A litigation friend appointed in Court proceedings if the tenant lacks capacity to litigate
  - An Appointee appointed by the DWP to manage a person’s benefits if they lack capacity
  - An IMCA [Independent Mental Capacity Advocate] commissioned by the local authority who are appointed where a person aged 16 or over lacks capacity to decide for themselves where to live and has no-one, such as a friend, relative, attorney or deputy to advise or support them.
- Equality Act 2010 – We are aware of our legal obligations not to discriminate against persons with a protected characteristic e.g. age or disability. When enforcement action is taken, for example, possession action due to anti-social behaviour or rent arrears, we will, where we are aware of the protected characteristic, consider whether that enforcement action is proportionate.

## **10.0 Compliance and Monitoring**

Compliance with this Policy will be monitored by periodic reviews of case records by the relevant team manager.

Any resident who receives a Clarion support service, whether it is tenancy sustainment, temporary accommodation or via our central support service Centra, will have their cases managed and reviewed regularly.

## **11.0 System Entities and Process Flows**

This policy relates to the Advice and Support entity and business process which will create a case to be made available for the relevant support team to manage.

## **12.0 Related Policies, Procedures, Processes and Guidance**

The following Clarion policies and procedures relate to customer vulnerability

### **Relevant Policies**

- Safeguarding Adults & Children
- Domestic Abuse
- End of Life
- Personal Care
- Self Medication Support
- Service User Finances
- Service User Personal Finance
- Withdrawal of Support
- Managing RISK
- Any policy which covers the Equality Act in more detail?

### **Relevant Procedures**

- Support Planning and Risk Assessments
- Safeguarding Adults & Children
- Mental Capacity
- Domestic Abuse
- Adaptations

### **Processes/Guidance**

- LiveSmart Manual
- Tenancy Sustainment Manual
- Temporary Accommodation Handbook
- Self Neglect and associated Risk Process – LiveSmart
- Resident at Risk (threat to take own life)
- Risk Register
- Deprivation of Liberties
- Guidance on working with tenants with impaired mental capacity

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