



Supported Housing Strategy

2025-2030



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Foreword

I am pleased to introduce our new Supported Housing strategy, developed with stakeholders with whom we will continue to work to ensure that this strategy is delivered.

Locally and nationally the population is getting older, so it is important that Dacorum Borough Council has an older persons' housing offer that is safe, affordable, energy efficient and that has services that can meet the wide range of needs of people who live in our accommodation.

We recognise that - for many - Supported Housing means more than just the property in which they live. Our tenants have told us that living in a community that has the space to mix with others is very important to them.

For some, getting older can mean that they need other services to help. Our Supported Housing service works proactively with other service providers, both voluntary and statutory, to ensure that our tenants can get the help they need.

Supported Housing is a key service that helps many tenants to remain living independently as they get older. The service available to our tenants and the properties in which they live needs to be able to match those needs both now and in the future.

We want our tenants who live in Supported Housing to feel valued, and we recognise the role that our service has in achieving this.

Simy Dhyani, Portfolio Holder – Housing & Property Services

Introduction

Dacorum Borough Council's Housing Strategy 2024 – 2029 sets several commitments that we will need to meet to fulfil its aims. The Supported Housing Strategy will sit alongside the Housing Strategy and will support the delivery of these commitments.

Our Vision

That people living in Dacorum have a safe, warm and affordable home that meets their needs; homes are energy-efficient and tackle the Climate and ecological emergency.

The Supported Housing Strategy supports the Council's vision and priorities of:



Providing good quality affordable homes, in particular for those most in need



Climate and ecological emergency



A clean, safe and enjoyable environment



Building strong and vibrant communities

National Context

The number of older people living in England is increasing. Over the next 20 years it is estimated that the population of England aged over 85 years will double to over 3 million people.

As people get older, their health can deteriorate, they are less able to travel and their housing needs change, which creates challenges for local authorities and other public services. With an increasing percentage of older people compared with the working-age population, providing these services is likely to become even more difficult.

Older people also tend to be lonelier due to social isolation. Issues such as being less able to move

around easily often mean that older people stay at home and have less contact with others.

We also know that loneliness can lead to older people using services such as their GP surgery to interact with other people. Changes in legislation have pushed local authorities and public services to recognise the importance of a 'person centred approach'. This stops services taking a 'one size fits all' stance and recognises that every person will have their own needs and aspirations. Services must adapt to fit people's needs. An example of this is The Care Act (2014) which introduced statutory responsibilities to promote wellbeing and keep adults at risk safe.

Nationally, service-providers now understand the impact that being lonely and isolated can have on older people. Additionally, the crucial role housing plays in improving health and wellbeing is recognised. To help people keep their independence, grow their support networks and stay well we must shape our housing offer to overcome these widespread and growing issues.

Local Context - Demographics

Dacorum is the largest district within Hertfordshire. In line with national trends the number of older people within the borough is growing with data suggesting that the 75+ age group will increase by 64% by 2041. This is comparable with projections at a county level.

Within this it is also anticipated that there will be a noticeable increase in the numbers of older people who are living with a disability, with cases of Dementia and mobility problems increasing significantly.

Local Context – Supported Housing Supply

We have a range of Supported Housing properties throughout the borough, which offer current and future tenants the choice of where they would like to live. Most of our properties were built before the 1980's.

We will continue to consider the number of properties we have available against current and future needs alongside ensuring that these properties are fit for purpose, affordable and that

our residents have access to a wide range of facilities and social activities. This could mean that in the future we will consider that some of our properties are not viable. However, we recognise that the population is ageing, so we will consider the future demands for this specialist housing before making any decisions and ensuring they are great places for people to live independently surrounded by like-minded individuals, whilst receiving whatever support they need.

It is important that the design of our properties meets the needs of our tenants both now and in the future, in terms of the design and layout of the properties. The Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation (HAPPI) and dementia friendly design principles provide guidelines to ensure that new build supported housing meets the changing needs and priorities of an ageing population.

Whilst none of our properties are classed as new build and have therefore not been designed specifically to meet these principles, having assessed our schemes a proportion of them do align with these principles. Through our Strategic Asset review we will identify further opportunities to meet these standards and work with other providers.

Our Supported Housing properties are intended to be available for applicants who are aged 60+. In some circumstances, we will consider applications from those under the age of 60 who have a specific need, with applicants assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Flexi care Housing option

When people's needs can't be met within their own home, or a Supported Housing property, we want to be able to offer our tenants choice about where they live. This aligns with Hertfordshire County Council's (HCC's) Supported Accommodation Strategy pledges to offer alternatives in each area so that people have the choice to continue to live as independently as possible. One alternative is flexi care accommodation which enables tenants to continue to live independently whilst receiving the care they require.

We currently have one flexi care scheme within the borough. Projections show that this isn't enough to meet the needs of the borough's older people. In future, it is likely that the demand for more flexi care schemes will continue to grow.

It is Dacorum Borough Council's intention to support the growth of flexi care provision in the borough through partnership working with HCC and through the delivery of the Affordable Housing SPD / Local Plan.

Local Context – Supported Housing

Our Supported Housing makes up approximately one fifth of the total number of properties that the Council owns and is split into three groups:

Scheme-based properties.

Self-contained one and two-bed homes on a designated site. Typically, schemes will have a range of communal facilities such as communal lounges, offices and laundries which offers opportunities for enhanced social activity. We regularly look to arrange activities with our residents across all our schemes for social inclusion, we also encourage residents to bring new activities to their schemes themselves. A Supported Housing Officer is allocated to each of our schemes, providing enhanced housing management services to our tenants and carrying out building safety checks.

Community properties

Smaller blocks of flats or rows of bungalows, these properties don't have any communal facilities provided on site, however our community residents are encouraged to access schemes and relevant activities and have an allocated Supported Housing Officer.

Flexi care at a designated scheme

Flexi care housing offers more support and care than is available than in supported housing. There is one flexi care scheme in the borough. A flexi care scheme is like a Supported Housing scheme but has an onsite care team based in the building. This means that tenants living there can access the onsite care team to meet their individual needs whilst remaining as independent as

possible. This dedicated team assist our tenants with care packages so they can continue to live in their own home.

It has been estimated that for each person living in housing with care settings, the financial benefit to NHS was approximately £2,000 per person per year (Housing LIN). This highlights the positive role of supported housing in helping to mitigate the challenges facing the health and social care sector, whilst enabling people to live independently for longer.

Anyone living in our Supported Housing properties can access an enhanced level of service compared with those living within our General Needs housing stock to provide independent living with access to any relevant services the tenant may require. We work closely with our internal teams and external agencies to ensure all our supported housing tenants can access varied services to provide the support they require, this could be assistance with benefit payments, tenancy sustainment, care and wellbeing services.

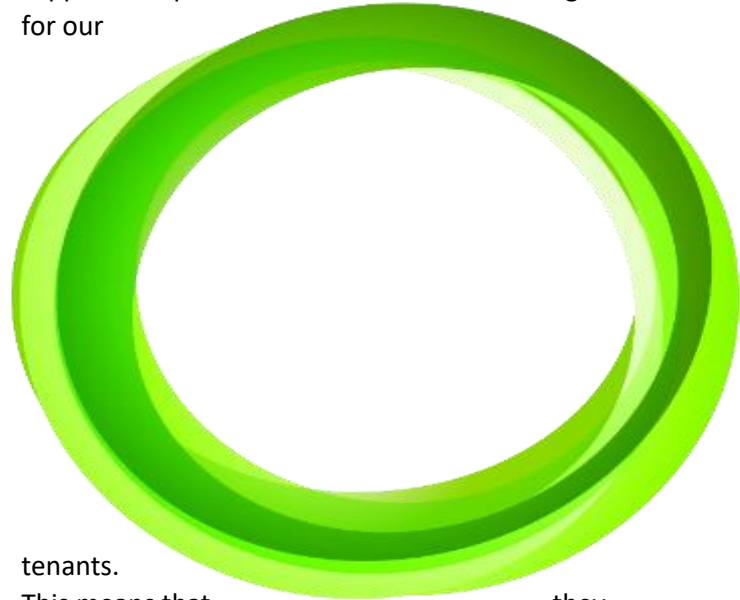
We want our supported housing properties to be seen as an attractive housing option for older people in the borough. As well as ensuring that are properties are safe and well maintained, we want them to be vibrant hubs of the local community. We acknowledge that the impact of social isolation and loneliness can be as significant as other risk factors such as smoking or obesity, and therefore we will ensure there are opportunities for our tenants to mix with one another regularly. We will work with others to ensure that typical barriers that prevent older people from getting involved are identified and where possible, resolved.

We follow Dacorum Borough Council's robust safeguarding guidelines to ensure all tenants are safeguarded in the appropriate way. We regularly liaise with our Clean, Safe and Green Team to provide well-kept green spaces for our tenants to enjoy. Should a tenant wish to move from a larger general needs property our Housing Needs Team can assist them with moving into supported housing, often providing a financial incentive to do so. Details of the service that Supported Housing tenants can access is described in more

detail at www.dacorum.gov.uk/supportedhousing

Local Context – Asset Management / Long Term Viability

Our Supported Housing properties need to support independent living for our



tenants. This means that they need to be safe, well maintained and accessible. As already mentioned, some of our properties were built several years ago and - in some cases - meeting the needs of our tenants will become challenging in the future.

This strategy will align with our Asset Management Strategy to identify the long-term investment needs of Supported Housing properties. Where schemes require significant investment, or where the schemes are deemed not to be suitable for older people due to an inability to adapt them, we may consider whether the schemes are viable to continue as specialist housing for older people.

Our properties play a vital role in supporting our tenants to live independently and in their ability to access a range of services such a social care, health and wellbeing services.

Therefore, alongside the consideration of the design principles and future investment needs of our properties, we will also consider several other factors when looking at long term viability. These will include, but are not limited to:

- Public transport links

- Proximity to health services.
- Proximity to leisure, cultural and religious services.
- Demand.
- Provision of internal and external facilities.
- Financial performance.

Commitments:

To develop this strategy, we considered several key changes in the housing sector on both a national and local scale, as well as the needs of the service and our communities to ensure we are delivering what is needed for our residents:

Based on this, we have developed four outcome-based commitments:

Commitment 1: We will promote independence and tailor our service to ensure it meets the individual needs of our tenants.

Commitment 2: We will provide accommodation that meets the needs of our supported housing tenants both now and in the future.

Commitment 3: We will review the suitability of our supported housing stock.

Commitment 4: We will enhance our partnership working to deliver the best services possible.



Commitment 1: We will promote independence and tailor our service to ensure it meets the individual needs of our tenants.

We will

Ensure that promoting independent living is the primary focus of the service.

Regularly assess the level of service that our tenants need and work with our tenants to co-design the service moving forwards.

Identify areas that our tenants need support with and monitor progress against these areas, to achieve the outcomes that our tenants want. This assessment and monitoring will be led by our tenants and are called 'Outcome star' assessments.

Support the delivery of regular activities to combat the impact of loneliness and social isolation. This will be done through activities that will allow people of all ages to socialise together, working alongside external agencies to provide as many activities as possible.

Work with tenants to remove obstacles that prevent them from getting involved in activities, such as transport, cost and lack of support.

Signpost tenants and support them to access appropriate services, including those that support tenancy sustainment.

Commitment 2: We will provide accommodation that meets the needs of our supported housing tenants both now and in the future.

We will

Work with tenants to identify opportunities for local groups to use our properties for activity that

will benefit our tenants, such as community and faith groups.

Take the opportunity to improve schemes, by enhancing facilities and creating additional or redesigned units as part of our strategic asset review.

Ensure that all properties meet EPC 'C' rating by 2050.

Continue to carry out the renewal of our community alarm replacement programme in all supported housing properties.

Work with others to ensure that our tenants' adaptive needs are met, including using Mutual Exchanges.

Where appropriate, support our tenants to move to a more suitable property.

Consider design principles with our current tenants when investing in our properties.

Continue to refurbish internal communal areas of our buildings.

Continue to ensure all Supported Housing is affordable and within local housing allowance.

Commitment 3: We will review the suitability of our supported housing stock.

We will

Include our Supported Housing stock in the strategic asset review, so that properties no longer suitable for supported housing are de-commissioned or repurposed for alternate use.

Consider opportunities, through the strategic asset review to commission new supported housing and / or flexi care accommodation.

Review our properties' locations in terms of access to local service and public transport links.

Assess our properties against industry-defined design principles.

Work in conjunction with our Property and Development teams to consider the long-term viability of schemes.

Consider whether any of the accommodation would be better suited for another use.

Work with others to identify opportunities to enhance the accommodation.

Through the review of suitability of our stock, we will undertake an analysis of the charges related to services provided to ensure they are reflective of the provision.

Commitment 4: We will enhance our partnership working to deliver the best services possible.

We will

Continue to work with Hertfordshire County Council to consider the opportunity to increase the number of flexi care units within the borough.

Continue to provide regular engagement opportunities for tenants to work with us to shape services.

Continue to develop relationships with the voluntary sector to ensure that tenants are aware of the services available.

Continue to work closely with statutory services to signpost and support tenants to access specialist services including Adult Care Services and Mental Health support.

Enhance our relationship with health, social care and voluntary sector partners to respond to concerns that can affect older people, such as frailty, dementia, social isolation and hospital discharge.

When identifying opportunities to enhance service delivery, additional charging will be minimised to ensure affordability for residents - whilst ensuring VFM

Continue to work with our Tenancy Management and Anti-social Behaviour teams to reduce the impact of ASB on our tenants

Continue to reduce the carbon output from communal areas of Supported Housing schemes by installing hybrid communal heating systems which incorporate air source heat pumps.

So far, ten of our Supported Housing Schemes have Solar PV installed and six have Hybrid Heat. We will continue to integrate these measures to help reduce our carbon outputs.

Governance and monitoring:

This Strategy will be supported by an action plan (attached at appendix 1).

The strategy will be reviewed annually, to respond to changes in guidance and legislation, and any changes in trends relating to need and demand for housing and services.

This strategy is a dynamic document and will be reviewed as required in the event of a major change in legislation, external economic and social factors, or guidance. In addition to the action plan, we have identified key performance measures that will be reported upon to demonstrate the outcomes being achieved on the commitments.

Accessibility of Document

Our aim is to make our services easy to use and accessible for everyone. We will take steps to make any reasonable adjustments needed for you to contact us, access our policies, or any requests to provide responses in other formats. Depending on the individual's needs, these might include:

- Using larger print, or a specific colour contrast
- Giving more time than usual to provide information or comments on a complaint
- Using the telephone rather than written communication
- Communicating with a person through their representative or advocate
- Arranging a single point of contact
- Having an 'easy read' version of the document

If you would like to contact us about reasonable adjustments or alternative formats, please email edi@dacorum.gov.uk or call us on **01442 228000**

If you prefer to write to us, send your letter to:

**Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team
Dacorum Borough Council
The Forum, Marlowes, Hemel Hempstead
Hertfordshire
HP1 1DN**

You can find information on Advocacy support here: <https://www.dacorum.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/contact-us/advocacy-support>

Conclusion

This strategy demonstrates the commitment of Dacorum Borough Council and its partners to make sure that our Supported Housing service meets the needs of our tenants both now and in the future.

Through our commitments and the actions set out, we show how this can be delivered.