



berneslai
homes

**Berneslai Homes Vulnerability
Protocol**

‘Something Doesn’t Look Right’

Filename	Vulnerability Protocol
Owner	Berneslai Homes Senior Management Team
Subject	Vulnerability
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Applicable to	All Berneslai Homes employees, temporary staff, contractors, board members and anyone working on behalf of Berneslai Homes
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Document Distribution

This document will be distributed to the following for review and feedback prior to submission for approval:

Name	Role	Date Issued for Review
Dave Fullen	Director of Customer and Estate Services	June 2020
BH SMT	Berneslai Homes Senior Management Team	July 2020
BH SMT	Berneslai Homes Senior Management Team	September 2021

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1. INTRODUCTION

Berneslai Homes is committed to supporting people living in the properties that we manage. We recognise that support is particularly important to our most vulnerable households (including tenants, their families, lodgers and housing applicants living within properties that Berneslai Homes manage) to enable them to be both financially and socially included.

Our aim is to support Health Creation; working with vulnerable tenants and their households to empower them to gain more of the 3 Cs: **Control** over the circumstances of their lives, meaningful **Contact** with others and **Confidence** to live the life they want. In doing this, we will enable vulnerable tenants and their households to integrate within their communities, successfully manage and sustain their tenancies. This is achieved via our internal services and / or in a multi-agency context.

Our approach is proactive, as we recognise the strengths in early intervention. We will endeavour to assertively engage with tenants and their households who we feel may benefit from support and work to remove barriers to non-engagement utilising innovative approaches.

However, some may still make the choice to refuse support. In these instances, where tenants fail to meet the conditions of their council tenancy, Berneslai Homes will progress appropriate enforcement in order to meet their responsibilities to the wider community to provide safe, peaceful and sustainable neighbourhoods.

Our simple ethos is one of 'Can't do / Won't do'.

2. WHAT IS VULNERABILITY?

Considering the wide range of potential types of vulnerability, it is almost impossible to give a single, definitive list of the potential signs of vulnerability. A person suffering from mental health issues will, for example, demonstrate quite different signs of vulnerability to someone who is at risk of domestic violence.

It is therefore essential to be aware at all times, to listen and engage actively and to ensure you are empathetic to the needs of others. You cannot assume that other people will see things the way you do, or respond in the way that you would because your own feelings and reactions are influenced by your particular life experiences.

Consider what it is you observe, and what you hear. Consider whether any body is in danger or whether someone's actions are putting any one else in danger. Consider the environment, who else is there, and the impact of the circumstances on the individual or others.

3. WHY SHOULD WE INTERVENE?

We recognise that vulnerable people may have barriers or issues outside their control, which affect their ability to maintain their tenancy. Their vulnerability may lead to further difficulties for example anti-social behaviour, hoarding, financial exclusion, social isolation, and self-neglect.

Berneslai Homes, as a responsible social landlord expects all employees to do the right thing, in line with this protocol.

We know that early intervention has the best chance of successful, positive and sustainable outcomes for people and that should issues manifest, the consequences can be significant.

4. OPPORTUNITIES FOR IDENTIFICATION

There are many opportunities for Berneslai Homes' employees to identify vulnerability, many of which will arise for front-line officers in the course of their normal, day-to-day duties.

We know that not all our employees can receive in depth training on the complex issues of vulnerability, or keep abreast of legislative responsibilities around this.

There is one simple ask of all employees: be aware of the importance of reporting suspected vulnerability even if you do not possess a great deal of knowledge of behaviour, symptoms and solutions and make sure you report any instances where ***'Something Doesn't Look Right'***.

All employees should be familiar with this protocol, have a broad understanding of such, and be aware of the referral process.

5. DETERMINING THE COURSE OF ACTION

Essentially there are 2 courses of action:

- Interventions delivered directly by Berneslai Homes, or
- Referrals to specialist support providers.

In many instances, individuals identifying the vulnerable case will not be the person to provide the support. It is essential therefore that it is recorded and referred correctly.

The **Housing Management Team Leader is the Designated Officer** within Berneslai Homes and should be notified of a potential vulnerability issue by raising a business action and assigning to the relevant Housing Management Team (with the exception of Construction Services or Contractors, who should email the appropriate Housing Management Team inbox and copying to the Team Leader. They will then assess the situation and determine the appropriate action/intervention, recording each action / contact on the Northgate business action. There are 5 Housing Management Team Leaders covering different geographical areas - details can be found in Appendix 1.

The Housing Management Team Leader assess the priority of any follow up action and refers to the appropriate officer to progress within 5 working days of receiving the notification (unless someone is deemed to be at risk of significant harm when this will be actioned immediately). As part of the investigation the Team Leader will make the relevant links internally, and with statutory, commissioning and voluntary services across BMBC and associated partners.

The Housing Management Team Leader will ensure that feedback is given to the individuals making the referral within the 5 working days to give assurances that the matter is being progressed.

In some instances, the officer identifying the support need will be the person responsible for delivering it, and in these instances, the support must be recorded on Northgate, under the relevant business action for monitoring and audit purposes. In addition, any relevant documentation such as external referrals for example should be filed in the appropriate place within SharePoint.

Where the person is an applicant on the Housing Waiting List please refer to the Lettings Policy – Specialist Assessment Procedure.

6. THREATS TO LIFE / RISK OF / EXPERIENCE OF SIGNIFICANT HARM

Children

A Vulnerable child is a person under 18 years who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

Call the police on 999 if you think the child is in immediate danger

Call the Council's Joint Investigation Team on 01226 772443 if you're worried about a child, but they're not in immediate danger (weekdays before 5pm)

Call the BMBC emergency duty team on 08449841800 if you're calling after 5pm, at weekends or bank holidays.

If in any doubt, contact a Housing Management Team Leader, Housing Management Group Manager or our Tenants First Service Manager who is our company Safeguarding lead.

Adults

A Vulnerable adult is a person 18 years or over who may be unable to take care of themselves or protect themselves from harm or from being exploited.

If you feel the adult is in immediate danger, phone 999 and email BMBC at adultprotection@barnsley.gov.uk

If you are worried, but you do not feel the vulnerable adult is in immediate danger (weekdays before 5pm) you should contact adult social services as soon as possible on (01226) 773300.

To report an urgent concern out of hours, call the emergency duty team on **01226 787789** if you're calling after 5pm, at weekends or bank holidays.

If in doubt, contact a Housing Management Team Leader, or Tenants First Service Manager, who is the company Safeguarding lead.

Suicide

Where we are made aware that a person is having suicidal thoughts, or they state they are going to commit suicide this section is to ensure employees know what our response should be in order to increase the safety of that individual.

Immediate threat to life (for example the person is explicitly stating that at the current time they are going to complete suicide, have already taken an overdose etc.) ring 999 for police and ambulance.

Threats to complete suicide (references are made to having suicidal thoughts) notify SYP via 101 providing all relevant information available and ask them to consider conducting a welfare check.

Record SYP incident number, report this to your line manager, share relevant information with colleagues / partner agencies etc. in line with your role, and follow this protocol.

7. SHARING OF INFORMATION

Information in relation to an individual's vulnerability is sensitive and should be used in a controlled and proportionate manner and only provided to other third parties, both internal and external, on a need to know basis.

Referrals within Berneslai Homes or to other agencies / third party organisations must be made to the appropriate individual and not via Global / shared E-mails accounts.

For emails being sent externally that contain any personal information these must be sent securely by encrypting the e-mail prior to sending. Information in relation to an individual's vulnerability is sensitive and should be used in a controlled and proportionate manner.

Referrals within Berneslai Homes or to other agencies must be made to the appropriate individual using a secure e-mail account and not via Global E-mails.

8. LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY

Berneslai Homes recognises its legal responsibilities. We will respond appropriately where we have a legal responsibility to refer people to appropriate agencies, or a duty to act as a good neighbour and refer people to appropriate services for assessment.

If the vulnerable person identified is neither a tenant nor applicant then we will refer to an appropriate agency.

Every member of Berneslai Homes' employees has a responsibility to identify vulnerable tenant and their households where there is a possibility that they need support, and to take appropriate action.

9. MONITORING EFFECTIVENESS

All referrals are recorded on Northgate and analysed by types of support required, referral route and type of intervention.

If any member of employees is concerned with any part of the implementation of this protocol including the commitment of any partner, these should be referred to the Executive Director of Customer and Estate Services or Tenants First Service Manager (Company Safeguarding Lead).

10. CASE STUDIES

A

Late one Friday afternoon, an e-form was submitted by a concerned friend of Ms A alleging that Ms A felt she was being harassed by professionals to such an extent she had attempted to take her own life. Immediately on receipt of this information background details were obtained; Ms A had been identified as being vulnerable and requiring support which she consented to. A referral had been made to Adult Social Care and earlier in the week a home visit conducted with HMO, Social Care and fire service and a subsequent plan put in place.

On the follow up visit, HMO's explained to Ms A the reason for their visit, and that her safety and wellbeing was of paramount importance. Ms A said that despite being reassured, professionals were there to support her she worried she may be in trouble and felt overwhelmed by the situation. She confirmed she had been proactive at visiting her GP that same morning who had prescribed her some anti-depressants and 'referred her for some support' but she could not remember who she had been referred to at this time.

Whilst at the address, HMO rang the Single Point of Access team (01226 645000) and with the verbal consent of the tenant, made a referral over telephone, explained the situation as it was felt this would be beneficial to her as she stated she had contemplated taking her own life on more than one occasion. They made an appointment over the telephone for her to be seen in clinic the following week. The HMO then rang the GP surgery to establish who Ms A had been referred to. They advised Ms A had been referred to My Best Life -social prescribing- resource (can only be referred to this by GP - refer to Vulnerability Protocol 8.2 for more info).

By the end of the visit Ms A reported feeling much more reassured and supported. Ms A was provided with written contact details for the Single Point of Access Team, 111 and Samaritans should she need to speak to anyone out of office hours.

B

At approximately 10.30am, the HMO listened to a voicemail from an internal colleague requesting a call back as they needed to speak to HMO as soon as possible. The call was to report that a Scheme Manager at one of the Independent Living Schemes (ILS) had found a note (which read like a suicide note) pushed under the main door of the building. HMO was able to establish it could have possibly been written by a relative of a tenant residing at the scheme, and they had contact with Mr B, the suspected writer of the note the previous day, who was an inpatient at Barnsley District General Hospital (BDGH). The HMO contacted BDGH to establish if Mr B was still in hospital, and the call concluded that in fact he had discharged himself the previous evening against medical advice. The HMO then contacted the relative of Mr B who resided at the ILS to establish if he had had any recent contact with Mr B and it was confirmed that he had spoken to him at 4am that morning when Mr B had attended the complex asking to be let in, but his relative had refused access and told him to return home.

The HMO then contacted 101 to report concerns for welfare of Mr B. Within 2 hours SYP contacted the HMO to advise they had managed to access the home of Mr B and found him to be safe and well. He confirmed he had written the note but had been in drink at the time and did not have any thoughts of self-harm /suicide currently.

A follow up home visit was conducted by Housing Management the following day, and a support checklist was completed. Mr B confirmed he felt low in mood and with consent, the HMO rang Single Point of Access team to make a referral. As Mr B had an allocated probation officer, they advised they could not accept a referral and he would need to access MH support via Court Liaison and Diversion Team which his probation officer could refer him to. Whilst at the home HMO contact Probation Officer to update and ask that a referral be made for Mr B. HMO also contacted Recovery Steps who were already offering support to Mr B to update of recent events and a follow up appointment made for him the following week. Given the identified support required HMO then arranged a planning meeting to include Mr B and all professionals involved to devise an action plan in order to coordinate support, monitor and review at regular intervals. Mr B was also supported by HMO to submit a housing application form as he felt a housing transfer would also be beneficial.

11. Housing Management Team Contact Details

Name		<u>Housing Management Team.</u>	Contact Detail
Dave Graham	Housing Management Team Leader	<u>North East Area Housing Management Team.</u>	01226 775555 davegraham@berneslaihomes.co.uk NorthEastHousing@berneslaihomes.co.uk
Leanne Cook	Housing Management Team Leader	<u>South Area Housing Management Team</u>	01226 775555 leannecook@berneslaihomes.co.uk SouthAreaHousing@berneslaihomes.co.uk
Eric Steer	Housing Management Team Leader	<u>Dearne Area Housing Management Team</u>	01226 775555 ericsteer@berneslaihomes.co.uk DearneHousing@berneslaihomes.co.uk
Jolanta Walker	Housing Management Team Leader	<u>Central Area Housing Management Team</u>	01226 775555 jolantawalker@berneslaihomes.co.uk CentralHousing@berneslaihomes.co.uk
Cheryl Hodkinson	Housing Management Team Leader	<u>North and Penistone Area Housing Management Team.</u>	01226 775555 cherylhodkinson@berneslaihomes.co.uk NorthAreaHousing@berneslaihomes.co.uk

Further details can be found on the Berneslai Homes Intranet Site - Berneslai Homes > Your Home > Your estate > Housing Management Team