

£6 million funding to improve housing and support for vulnerable tenants

- Funding for councils to improve conditions for vulnerable tenants living in supported housing
- Today's allocations follow pilots which successfully tested new enforcement measures including a property inspection regime and creation of new multi-disciplinary teams to speed up enforcement
- Increased enforcement will drive up housing standards and level of support for vulnerable people and ensure unscrupulous landlords are deterred

Vulnerable tenants living in poor-quality supported housing with little to no support from providers will see significant improvements as government helps councils crackdown on unscrupulous landlords.

Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Hull councils will receive over £6 million from the government's £20 million Supported Housing Improvement Programme to carry out more frequent and thorough inspections of supported housing.

Supported housing provides accommodation alongside care, support, or supervision for residents who may have experience of homelessness, mental health issues or domestic abuse. Schemes should provide them with the skills and confidence needed to enter longer-term accommodation and live more independent lives.

Many residents receive good quality, tailored support but the government is aware there are instances of supported housing landlords providing unacceptable levels of support while charging extortionate rents.

The government wants to ensure that people in supported housing who need help with turning their lives around – for example after a crisis such as rough sleeping or homelessness – can do so in decent accommodation and with the right support. This programme funds councils to use enforcement measures, such as inspections, to improve quality and value for money in the provision of supported housing by landlords.

Supported housing should provide suitable, safe, hazard-free accommodation which meets tenants' needs, and also the right support, for example supervision, advice, or help with life skills, to help tenants live independently in the community. Poor performing landlords will need to improve and provide better accommodation and support for their vulnerable tenants, such as carrying out support reviews with the tenant and referring

them to specialist agencies if needed.

Those failing to do so face enforcement action. Councils have the power to issue penalty charge notices, prohibition orders that could stop part or all of the building being used, and to prosecute where poor accommodation standards risk the health and safety of residents.

Today's announcement follows successful pilots in the 4 council areas, which helped them carry out over 1,000 property inspections of supported housing. An independent evaluation found the pilot schemes had a positive impact on councils' ability to manage their local supported housing – they were able to establish innovative and effective ways of working, take action to improve standards and ensure costs are reasonable.

Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing Eddie Hughes said:

While there are many excellent supported housing providers in the market, we know there are a minority that are shamelessly taking advantage of vulnerable residents, and we are committed to ending this practice.

This funding will allow Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool and Hull to build on their successful pilot schemes. This work is already benefitting local communities by tackling poor practice and improving conditions for vulnerable tenants.

Hull councillor Jan Loft, portfolio holder for housing and homelessness, said:

This is great news for Hull.

I'm delighted that we can build on its success and continue driving up accommodation standards and ensuring that residents get good quality support services that meet their needs, which are vital to enable them to move towards living independently and to fulfil their potential.

Leader of Blackburn with Darwen Council, Councillor Phil Riley, said:

We are pleased to have secured this significant new funding for such vital work.

This is a complicated problem but we can now build on earlier successes and look at new initiatives to scrutinise and improve standards in this sector of the housing market.

Councillor Lynn Williams, leader of Blackpool Council, said:

We have developed clear pathways for providers that enables them to understand what is needed in Blackpool and enables the development of schemes in the right place for the right people delivering value for money for the public purse.

The funding that has been announced today gives us the opportunity to build on these strong foundations and really take forward our work with both providers and people who benefit from supported housing to ensure that the standards are embedded consistently and we support the development of schemes that help people maintain and increase their independence.

We are unapologetic about offering not only support but challenge to the market to make sure that the supported housing schemes in Blackpool deliver great outcomes.

Further funding awards from the scheme will be made to councils around the country in the autumn.