

Pilots to improve supported housing for vulnerable people extended

- Supported housing pilots in Birmingham, Blackpool, Blackburn and Hull will be extended for a further 6 months
- Pilots will test new approaches to improve standards in supported housing – backed by an extra £2.3 million in funding
- Findings will inform future national policy on supported housing as part of the government's commitment to build back better

Four pilots to improve the standard and quality of supported housing in England have been extended, backed by an additional £2.3 million, Minister for Housing Eddie Hughes announced today (19 March 2021).

The pilots – in Birmingham, Hull, Blackpool, Bristol and Blackburn – were launched in October to test innovative approaches to drive up standards and ensure vulnerable people receive the tailored support they need – with findings to inform future national policy.

The pilots have been extended for another 6 months so that councils can build on their work so far, improving support for residents and value for money. The pilots will also strengthen enforcement in the sector, such as accommodation inspections, to crack down on the small number of landlords who provide poor-quality homes and inadequate support to the vulnerable people living there.

In supported housing, accommodation is provided alongside care, support or supervision to help people live as independently as possible in the community. The pilots are focused on short-term supported accommodation, which is often for vulnerable people such as those with experience of homelessness, mental health issues or domestic abuse, aiming to provide them with the skills to enter longer-term independent accommodation.

Examples of innovative new approaches include:

- Hull City Council are testing new ways of tackling Housing Benefit fraud to challenge landlords exploiting the system, moving into the sector to claim enhanced benefit payments while providing minimal support. This new approach includes taking legal action where necessary.
- Birmingham City Council are working with West Midlands Police to tackle criminal exploitation of vulnerable people in supported housing by organised crime groups, by sharing information with local neighbourhood policing teams.
- In Blackpool, the council is carrying out a review of its supported

housing for domestic abuse victims and their children to ensure residents are receiving appropriate tailored support.

- Blackburn City Council are working with networks of other local councils across the North West to share and develop best practice in driving up standards.

Over the next 6 months the 4 councils will gather more data and evaluate their work so that the government can fully assess the impact of the pilots and introduce national changes.

Eddie Hughes MP, Minister for Rough Sleeping and Housing said:

Supporting the most vulnerable people in our society is a priority for the government as we build back better. It is unacceptable that some vulnerable people are living in sub-standard supported accommodation, receiving insufficient help that does not meet their needs.

We are determined to take action to drive up standards across the sector and by extending the pilots in Birmingham, Hull, Blackpool and Blackburn we can continue test innovative new approaches. From this, we will develop long-term nation-wide solutions, and ensure vulnerable people get high quality accommodation and the support they need.

DWP Minister Baroness Stedman-Scott said:

The decision to extend these pilots reinforces our commitment to the most vulnerable people in our communities.

Supported housing has the power to change lives and we will work with partners to improve standards and ensure this vital support is available for those who need it, when they need it most.

Kate Henderson, Chief Executive of the National Housing Federation said:

We welcome the news that government is extending these supported housing pilots. They are an important step towards promoting high standards in supported housing – something which housing associations are absolutely committed to. The extension and additional funding will give local authorities and housing associations a chance to complete the in-depth work they set out to do.

Supported housing plays a vital role in our society, ensuring that thousands of people have the home and support they need to live independent and healthy lives. We must continue to invest in it and develop it, including building more supported housing to help more

people access these desperately needed services.

The pilots sit alongside a [National Statement of Expectation](#), published in October 2020, which sets out standards and quality expected by government in supported housing and best practice across the sector.

During the pandemic the government has worked closely with councils and the sector to offer vulnerable people safe accommodation and support.

That work is ongoing and in January the government had successfully supported over 37,000 people, with 11,000 in emergency accommodation and 26,000 supported into longer-term settled accommodation.

In October we also launched a pilot in Bristol. Bristol City Council has not submitted a bid for funding for phase two of the pilots but will still carry out inspections and monitoring of the city's supported housing units in the coming months.

The pilots are intended to improve quality of non-commissioned provision in priority areas. The measures will test different to oversight carefully and proportionately, in a way that will not impact good quality, legitimate providers. The pilots will involve joined up, collaborative working between local partners.

Examples of people who might live in supported housing include:

- Older people with support needs
- People with a learning disability
- People with a physical disability
- Autistic people with a support need
- Individuals and families at risk of or who have experienced homelessness
- People recovering from drug or alcohol dependence
- People with experience of the criminal justice system
- Young people with a support need (such as care leavers or teenage parents)
- People with mental ill health