

**JOINT OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY TRANSITION – HOUSING TASK GROUP
12TH MARCH 2009**

HOMELESS MEDICAL ASSESSMENT

Purpose of the Report

To provide the task group with an opportunity to discuss the harmonised policy relating to medical assessments for homeless people.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Medical Assessments will be used by Housing Officers to help determine if a homeless applicant has a priority need for accommodation when considering s189(1)c

"A person who is vulnerable as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap or physical disability or other special reasons, or with whom such a person resides or might reasonably be expected to reside;"

1.2 The main homelessness duties in s193(2) and s195(2) of the 1996 Act (as amended) apply only to applicants who have a priority need for accommodation. Section 189 (1) and the Homelessness (Priority Need for Accommodation) (England) Order 2002 provide various categories to help determine who would have a priority need for accommodation.

1.3 Inquiries as to whether an applicant has a priority need must be carried out in all cases where an officer has reason to believe that an applicant may be homeless or threatened with homelessness, and is eligible for assistance.

1.4 It is an officers judgement on whether the applicant is vulnerable, and when determining whether the applicant is or isn't vulnerable the officer should consider, whether, when homeless, the applicant would be less able to fend for him/herself than an ordinary homeless person so that he or she would suffer injury or detriment, in circumstances where a less vulnerable person would be able to cope without harmful effects. This is the legal test of the assessment of vulnerability when considering physical or mental illness.

Assessment of vulnerability (Homeless Applicants only):

- 2.1 The applicants vulnerability must be assessed on the basis that he or she is or will become homeless, and not on his or her ability to fend for him or herself while still housed.
- 2.2 As housing officers have limited medical knowledge and understanding they should have regard to any advice from medical professionals, social services or current providers of care and support that the applicant may have.
- 2.2 No third party that is used to obtain extra information regarding a clients vulnerability such as a GP, counsellor, support worker or consultant, can make the overall decision on someone's priority for housing, nor do they hold responsibility for the decision. Any decision of vulnerability will be made by the housing officer and by them only.
- 2.3 In cases where there is doubt as to the extent of any vulnerability, housing officers should seek a medical opinion.

3.0 Process to obtain further medical information

- 3.1 In seeking a medical or professional opinion, letter LT1 should be used and sent to the most appropriate person, agency or support worker who would be able to support or supply the requested information. This should be sent with the medical assessment form MF1 which the client first completes giving written consent for a housing officer to obtain personal and confidential information.
- 3.2 When a request is made to a GP a charge is normally applied. In most cases this is £25.00, but it should be no more than £35.00. Any charge made by a GP Surgery will be met using the housing options budget.
- 3.3 Before a request is made to a GP the Housing Officer should raise a purchase order through the Council's SAP system and appropriate approval should be made before either LT1 or MF1 is sent in the post.

4.0 Obtaining independent medical advice

- 4.1 When dealing with a complex case or a s202 homelessness review, the Housing Officer may require an independent medical opinion to help inform their decision on a clients vulnerability. In the first instance the officer should obtain all the information they can from any professional person or agency that is currently working with the applicant. If all information they are able to receive is obtained and a firm decision on a clients vulnerability cant be made then a request should be made to have a report written by an independent medical professional.

- 4.2 To obtain this report a request should be made to NowMedical, who are an independent medical service and currently advise over 120 Local Authorities across the country. All NowMedical doctors hold a higher professional medical qualification in addition to their existing GP qualification and are therefore well placed to form an independent view of an applicants vulnerability.
- 4.3 Any referral made to NowMedical should first be approved by the Head of Housing Options. Once approval is received the officer making the referral should then complete the standardised Nowmedical referral form SR1.
- 4.4 Depending on the urgency of the case Nowmedical will send a report within 1 - 5 days and this report should then be used to help inform the officers decision regarding vulnerability..
- 4.5 The cost of this service is currently £30 for a general case and £50 if a psychiatrists report is required, but will only be used on very few cases.

5.0 Equalities Statement

- 5.1 The policy aims to deliver quality services without prejudice and discrimination to meet the needs of all the community, regardless of age, cultural or ethnic background, disability, gender, marital status, religious or political persuasion or sexual orientation.

The policy will adhere to the Equality and Diversity policy developed by Wiltshire Council.

6 REVIEW

- 6.1 The policy will be reviewed annually.

April 2010

Letter Template LT1

Insert date

Authority

Add 1

Add 2

Add 3

Postcode

Dear *(Sir/Madame)*

Request for Medical information to determine Vulnerability
(Clients name, Address and DOB)

I am currently dealing with *(applicants name)* application for housing on the grounds of homelessness.

(applicants name) has stated that they have medical conditions, which may be relevant to his/her housing situation. In order to make an informed decision, I would be grateful if you could provide information in relation to the following:-

(List questions that are relevant to the individual case)

I have also enclosed a medical assessment form for you to complete which includes signed consent from the applicant giving his/her agreement to release such information.

Your urgent response would be appreciated as it will assist in our assessment of this person. If you would like to discuss my letter further, I can be contacted on *(Contact tel No.)*

Yours sincerely

(Your name)

Housing Manager

name@wiltshire.gov.uk

nowmedical

REFERRAL FORM

Referring Borough	<input type="text"/>	Date	<input type="text"/>
Applicant's Name	<input type="text"/>		
Reference/Order no	<input type="text"/>		
Housing Officer	<input type="text"/>	Tel.	<input type="text"/>
Respond By:	Fax.	<input type="text"/>	
	Email	<input type="text"/>	

DOCUMENTS AND REPORTS ATTACHED

For assessment by:	<input type="checkbox"/> General Medical Adviser	<input type="checkbox"/> Psychiatric Adviser
Matter to consider:	<input type="checkbox"/> Vulnerability on medical grounds	<input type="checkbox"/> Intentionality
	<input type="checkbox"/> Suitability of accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/> Future housing needs

PLEASE ATTACH THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

- What is the applicant's medical diagnosis or diagnoses?
- Precisely what treatment is he/she on?
- Is there any relevant past medical history?
- Which hospitals, clinics or specialists is he/she under?
- How are his/her daily activities affected by their medical condition?

OTHER INSTRUCTIONS OR COMMENTS FOR NOWMEDICAL