



## Homes for Cathy: Our nine commitments

Working with Crisis, Homes for Cathy have developed nine commitments for social landlords to adopt.

We have reviewed our action plan, procedures and working practices to embed these commitments into our practices for 2021; to ensure we can make a real difference to homelessness.

### **1. To contribute to the development and execution of local authority homelessness strategies:**

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We provide temporary accommodation across the East Midlands for homeless prevention:

- Linby and Corporation Oaks in Nottingham
- Heathfield House in Leicester City
- Supporting young people in Leicestershire, Newark, Bassetlaw and Sherwood
- Supporting private landlords in Broxtowe, Rushcliffe, Gedling.

We also provide a floating support homeless prevention service in Nottingham, Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire Dales and Leicestershire.

In 2017 the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 introduced a new requirement to all registered social landlords, known as the 'Duty to Refer'. NCHA have written this duty into all of our tenancy management procedures. We ask our colleagues to contact their local authority if anyone is rough sleeping and will launch an internal reminder campaign in the winter.

### **2. To operate flexible allocations and eligibility policies which allow individual applicants' unique sets of circumstances and housing histories to be considered.**

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We recognise that a person's housing history and circumstances may mean they need more support to sustain a tenancy; this shouldn't be a barrier to housing. We have established a new Community Support team and our allocations team will refer to them any new tenants that need additional support.

Our thorough referral processes for both our Welfare Reform Team and Community Support Team help ensure that all customers, whatever their tenure, can benefit from these services, and that they are more tailored to their needs.

### **3. To offer constructive solutions to applicants who aren't deemed eligible for an offer of a home.**

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We have introduced a new offer to allow joint tenancies for adult home shares, where there is a demonstrable local need. This is helping many tenants who would otherwise be subject to the bedroom tax.

The joint tenancy option will be advertised through local authority's choice-based lettings, where a property is deemed suitable.

### **4. To not make homeless any tenant seeking to prevent their homelessness (as defined in the Crisis plan).**

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Where a customer is facing potential eviction, our Debt and Benefit Advisor will engage with the household to offer advice and support whilst seeking to secure a repayment plan.

We've written key stages into our housing management policy where tenants will be referred to the Community Support team, who will co-produce a tenancy sustainment plan and work with the customer to prevent homelessness.

Working alongside the Community Support Team and our Debt and Benefit team we will do all we can to prevent court-action.

### **5. To commit to meeting the needs of vulnerable tenant groups.**

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Referrals to our Community Support team will be triaged within 48 hours to identify those that need face-to-face support. That support will then be deployed within days.

The Community Support team will work with vulnerable tenant groups on a range of needs including building community connections, brokering in support from statutory and non-statutory agencies, debt and benefit advice, employability support, accessing furniture, carpets and white goods.

We deliver more than 1 million hours of support to over 4,000 people in our supported accommodation and in the community, helping them to live as independently as possible. We provide support to people experiencing homelessness, those fleeing domestic violence, with learning disabilities, mental health issues, older and young people; helping them to maintain their tenancies and access permanent settled accommodation.

### **6. To work in partnership to provide a range of affordable housing options which meet the needs of all homeless people in their local communities.**

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We have a significant development plan to build new houses in partnership with local authorities. Our goal is to build a home a day in the East Midlands. In 2019/2020 we began development on 363 new homes.

We're a Homes England strategic partner, together with Longhurst Group. Together we've secured £71.7 million of government funding to build more homes to reduce the current housing shortage

We work with local authorities to identify the specific housing need of each area to ensure our developments are fulfilling local demand. We build homes for a mix of tenures; social and affordable rents, supported housing, shared ownership and Rent to Buy.

We work closely with Longhurst Group, with whom we've formed a consultancy called Pitch Development Services. Pitch, formerly called POD, supporting housing associations and councils to deliver affordable homes

We continue to work with Opportunity Nottingham to identify properties for Housing First. Housing First is an initiative for rough sleepers to address the traditional approach of expecting them to engage with support provision consistently before being given an offer of accommodation which rarely worked given their chaotic lifestyles. Housing First provides a home with wrap around support, thereby improving the chances at tenancy sustainment with considerable success.

## **7. To ensure that properties offered to homeless people are ready to move into.**

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Our Property Services team are leading on our review of the 'Fit to Let' standard. All of our care and support properties are carpeted and white goods are provided. We provide bedding and a home starter set so that people can move in and have a good night sleep and something to eat.

## **8. To contribute to ending migrant homelessness in the areas housing associations operate.**

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Over the last seven years we have worked closely with Nottingham City Council, Gedling Borough Council, Derbyshire County Council and Newark and Sherwood District Council to identify suitable properties for the Vulnerable Syrian Refugee Resettlement project.

To date we have provided 16 properties to the scheme and a 17<sup>th</sup> has been made available for a new family arriving in early 2021.

We will continue to work closely with local authorities to identify and provide suitable homes for families seeking refuge.

## **9. To lobby, challenge and inspire others to support ending homelessness.**

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As a Homes for Cathy member, we will share good news stories and best practice both internally and externally, to help prevent homelessness and help more people secure homes. We will commit to externally share a new case study at least once a quarter and use our popular social media channels to share the key, relevant messages.

We will play our part in the collective voice of the Homes for Cathy campaign, to continue to lobby those with the power to bring about solutions and lasting change. We invite our local MPs to our homelessness projects and strive to keep the issues of homelessness in the hearts and minds of our political stakeholders.