

Policy for the Sourcing of Temporary Accommodation



Dorset
Council

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out Dorset Council's approach to sourcing temporary accommodation in the discharge of its duties as a local housing authority. Its primary aim is to ensure that sufficient, suitable, cost-effective and legally compliant accommodation is secured to meet the needs of homeless households

This policy should be read alongside the following documentation (this list is not exhaustive)

- Housing Voids Technical Specification: Dorset Council, Property and Housing Repairs.
- Void Procedure (Temporary Accommodation)
- Placement and Suitability Policy and Procedure (in development)
- Lettable Standards Guidance (Temporary Accommodation)
- Rent Setting Policy (in development)
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement – Dorset Council
- Health and Safety Policy (Property and Premises) – Dorset Council

2. Context

Dorset Council owns a small amount of stock and relies predominantly on external providers to secure temporary accommodation.

Whilst the Council seeks to minimise the use of emergency Bed and Breakfast accommodation it is recognised that in certain circumstances this may be necessary.

Most longer-term accommodation is expected to be sourced through leasing arrangements with the private sector. This will include long-term lease arrangements (10 years plus one day) via private investment.

3. Purpose and Aims

The purpose and aims of this policy are to

- meet statutory homeless needs
- secure sufficient and suitable accommodation for homeless households
- minimise use of expensive emergency accommodation
- reduce reliance on emergency placements
- reduce out of area placements where possible



- support households toward settled housing solutions
- a transparent and consistent approach to sourcing temporary accommodation

4. Scope

This policy applies to all properties sources for use or management by Dorset Council across its temporary accommodation portfolio.

This includes (but is not limited to);

- properties leased or licensed from private landlords
- properties managed in partnership with registered providers or commissioned support services

The policy applies to a wide range of accommodation types including:

- emergency Bed and Breakfast
- hostels (self-contained or shared rooms with communal facilities)
- shared accommodation (e.g. with shared kitchens and/or bathrooms)
- self-contained accommodation (exclusive use of all living facilities)
- supported housing schemes.

5. Legal and Regulatory Framework

The following legislation, regulatory standards and national frameworks underpin property management and the provision of suitable, compliant accommodation.

A. Statutory Legislation

This policy and the way in which the council manages its voids process complies with the contractual, statutory, regulatory and health and safety requirements as set out in the following non exhaustive list:

- Housing Act 1996 (Part 7) as amended
 - Housing Act 1985
 - Localism Act 2011
 - Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 1982
 - Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2024 (Awaab's Law)
 - Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 (GSIUR) as amended 2018.
- Approved Code of Practice and guidance.



- Health and Safety Legislation including Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Housing Health and Safety Rating System (England) Regulations 2005
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002 (COSHH)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990
- Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 as amended by Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Regulations 2015 and Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm (Amendments) Regulations 2022
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018
- Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 2018
- Electrical Safety, Quality and Continuity Regulations 2002
- Electrical Equipment (Safety) Regulations 2016
- Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012
- Licensing and Management of Houses in Multiple Occupation and Other Houses (Miscellaneous Provisions) England Regulations 2006
- Furniture and Furnishings (Fire) (Safety) Regulations 1988
- Data Protection Act 2018 and GDPR
- Equalities Act 2010

B. Regulatory Standards and National Guidance

- Code of Guidance Homelessness
- Regulator of Social Housing – Home Standard
- Decent Homes Standard (2006 – pending update)
- Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) Practice Guidance
- Homes England Capital Funding Guide

6. Principles for Sourcing Accommodation

This policy is underpinned by five strategic principles

1. Safety first – accommodation must be safe and legally compliant.
2. Suitable – accommodation must meet household needs
3. Value for money – obtaining the best use of public funds



4. Locality – keeping households as close as possible to their community
5. Prevention of long term temporary accommodation dependency – seek to support move into settled accommodation as quickly as possible.

In sourcing temporary accommodation the council will seek to actively manage temporary accommodation market to achieve value for money, maintain a diverse and resilient supply base, reduce dependency on individual providers and prevent excessive pricing through benchmarking, competition, demand management and strategic investment in council- controlled accommodation.

All sources of temporary accommodation will be guided by the following principles:

- Sufficiency – ensuring adequate supply to meet demand
- Suitability – meeting the needs of households and statutory requirements. The sourcing approach will consider housing needs assessment insight to ensure accommodation meets:
 - 1 Household size and make up
 - 2 Medical needs and disabilities
 - 3 Access requirements
 - 4 Risk relating to domestic abuse
 - 5 Educational needs of children
 - 6 Employment and caring responsibilities
 - 7 Cultural and religious considerations when needed
- Value for money – achieving cost efficiency and long term financial sustainability. The sourcing approach will consider;
 1. Relevant framework agreements
 2. Benchmarking of nightly rates
 3. Relevant competitive
 4. Whole life cost assessment
- Compliance – adhering to relevant legislation, standards and safeguarding requirements. Temporary accommodation will meet the council's Lettable standard and be adjusted where required to meet the standard.
- Sustainability – this policy will consider the council's sustainability commitment for temporary accommodation. Where possible it will:
 1. give preference, where practicable, to accommodation with higher energy performance standards and lower running costs to occupants.



2. acquire newer or retrofitted properties where possible
3. encourage providers to improve energy efficiency ratings
4. reduce reliance on poor quality and energy inefficient stock
5. procure properties close to households existing communities, schools, employment, health services and networks wherever possible.
6. work with providers who contribute positively to local communities where possible

Ethical sourcing – the council will not knowingly source accommodation from providers or investors whose business practices fail to meet appropriate ethical, legal or regulatory standards.

- Local provision – prioritising accommodation where possible as follows
 1. Within the Dorset council area
 2. Close to support networks
 3. Near education and employment
 4. Accessible by public transport
 5. Near health and support services

Supplier selection and due diligence

The council will undertake the following checks:

- financial stability (where relevant)
- landlord/director due diligence – consideration of criminal offences, practice of unlawful discrimination, contravention of any provision of law relating to housing or acted otherwise than in accordance with any applicable code of guidance for the management of a HMO
- property ownership verification
- compliance history
- references and track record checks
- safeguarding arrangements
- insurance requirements

All relevant agreements will set expectations on termination, handover requirements for residents, performance, provider suspension or removal.

7. Accommodation by Type



Bed and Breakfast Accommodation

Approach

The council aims to minimise the use of emergency accommodation but works with a limited number of trusted providers, some of whom offer entire buildings for council temporary accommodation use. Where appropriate block booking arrangements may be utilised to achieve cost efficiencies.

Where contracted providers are unable to meet demand alternative nightly paid accommodation, including hotel chains may be secured through spot purchasing.

Regard will be had with regards to the regulations governing the required standards for properties that fall within the definition of House of Multiple Occupation (HMO).

Location

Preference will be given to accommodation within the Dorset Council area. However out-of-area placements may be made where:

No suitable in area accommodation is available; or

A specific placement requirement has been identified based on household needs.

Usage restrictions

B&B accommodation will only be used for households with dependent children where no alternative is available and must not exceed six weeks.

B&B accommodation will not be offered to applicants under 18 years of age.

The council will avoid the use of B&B for care leavers wherever possible. Where this is unavoidable, the placement must be for the shortest period possible, be subject to a documented risk and suitability assessment, and include appropriate support arrangements.

Private Sector Leased Accommodation

Approach

Private Sector Leasing (PSL) forms the primary source of longer-term temporary accommodation. These properties are secured from private landlords and managed as part of the council's temporary accommodation portfolio. In addition, the council is considering the development and operating of a leasing model through investment partnership arrangements. The aim of both models is to reduce reliance on emergency



accommodation by increasing the supply of longer-term temporary accommodation. However accommodation sourced through the investment route will be subject to separate business case approval, governance and operational procedures.

The Council will maintain a mix of property sizes to meet varying household needs. It may;

Prioritise two-bedroom properties where this supports efficient portfolio management and value for money. Two-bedroom homes generally offer the greatest flexibility across a range of household sizes. However accommodation will only be used where it is suitable for the household concerned and consistent with statutory requirements.

Source properties with more than four bedrooms where a specific need is identified.

Affordability and Value

The council will seek to source temporary accommodation at rates that are aligned to or as close reasonably achievable to the applicable Local Housing Allowance (LHA). Where accommodation costs exceed LHA levels, the council must be satisfied that the accommodation represents best value, meets identified housing need and that alternative suitable accommodation at a lower cost is not reasonably available.

- It will use LHA levels as the primary benchmark against which value for money is assessed.
- Consider incentives above these levels where there is clear evidence of longer term financial benefit

Location Criteria

Properties will normally be sourced within the Dorset Council area. Location selection will be made considering:

- Existing concentrations of temporary accommodation;
- Access to transport links and support services
- Demand patterns based on applicants' origin postcode.

Out-of-area sourcing will only be considered in exceptional or urgent circumstances.

Registered Providers

Approach



The Council will continue to work with a small number of Registered Providers (RPs) to access social housing stock for use as temporary accommodation.

However as the Council's preferred approach is to discharge its duty into permanent housing offers under Part 6 of the Housing Act, use of RP stock for temporary accommodation will be limited.

Agreements

Formal agreements will be established with Registered Providers. These will consider the requirements of this policy;

Define roles and responsibilities;

Set quality and performance expectations;

Ensure compliance with statutory and contractual requirements.

Acquisition of property by Dorset Council

Approach

The purchase of units for use as TA will help the Council to meet demand from homeless households by providing a ready supply accommodation. Purchasing homes provides a secure base for residents during their time in TA. In terms of the cost of this provision, by investing in assets, the Council is less exposed to shortages and fluctuations in rent costs in the private market and the use of expensive hotel provision.

The Council has and will continue to make use of MHCLG and Homes England funding such as Rough Sleeper Accommodation Programme (RSAP), Single Homeless Accommodation Programme (SHAP) and Local Authority Housing Fund Round LAHF grant programmes to facilitate these acquisitions. Applying for funds in future programmes will be considered when they can assist in supporting the Council to meet an identified need.

Funding will often be targeted to help specific groups, if there are gaps in provisions that this funding can help to meet then applications will be considered. Funding programmes can cater for single person, self-contained provision whilst other rounds result in medium sized family homes (2-3 beds) and larger settled units (4bed+).

It is anticipated that most purchases will be simple transactional purchases made on the open market.

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Location Criteria

Properties will normally be sourced within the Dorset Council area. Location selection will be made considering:

- Existing concentrations of temporary accommodation;
- Access to transport links and support services
- Demand patterns based on applicants origin postcode.

Out of area sourcing will not be considered except in exceptional circumstances.

8. Quality Assurance

For the period when the temporary accommodation is owned, leased, used and/or managed by the council a pre-procurement inspection, a pre-placement inspection and periodic re-inspections will be undertaken to ensure that

- Properties are suitable for intended use;
- Properties are safe and in good condition
- Properties hold valid evidence of mandatory safety certifications;
- No accommodation with a category 1 hazard and/or significant category 2 hazard is sourced
- No accommodation with an EPC rating of F or below will be sourced
- Accommodation meets required standards
- providers are suspended where serious hazards are identified.

The council will consider resident feedback, monitor relevant complaints and carry out spot checks. It will monitor and maintain key performance indicators which may include

- percentage of properties passing inspection
- Void turnaround times
- Number of complaints
- Average cost per placement
- Percentage of placements within the council area
- Number of households moved to settled homes

Equality and Diversity

The council's sourcing decisions for temporary accommodation will:

- Avoid discrimination



- Meet public sector equality duties
- Consider protected characteristics
- Ensure reasonable adjustments for disabled residents where possible

9. Monitoring and Review

The implementation of this policy will be regularly monitored to ensure it remains effective in meeting demand, achieving value for money, and complying with legal obligations. The policy will be reviewed periodically to reflect changes in resources, demand, funding and legislation.

10. Document Control

Field	Details
Policy Owner	Service Manager – Temporary Accommodation and Housing Supply

