

Housing and Social Services – Joint Assessments (*ref 22*)

- 1.** This *Quick Brief* deals with the reasons for joint assessments, or protocols for housing and social services working together where people have both housing and care or support needs. It deals with guidance, the law and good practice. It is a recommendation in *Valuing People para 4.20* - joint housing/community care assessment.
- 2.** It is recommended in the first *Joint Circular on Housing and Community Care DoE 10/92 and LAC (92)12* based on the wording of *Section 47* of the *NHS and Community Care Act 1990* which requires social services authorities to notify the local housing authority if there appears to be a housing need, and invite them to assist in the assessment.
- 3.** *Para 10* of the Circular says Referral procedures will need to be developed and agreed locally. Housing and social service authorities should adopt joint arrangements to deal with assessments and consider the need to nominate particular officers to be responsible. A *Code of Guidance on Parts VI and VIII of the Housing Act 1996 paras 2.14-2.18* give advice on joint working with social services.
- 4.** In practice an individual begins sometimes with the housing department for reasons of homelessness/ housing need or with social services for an assessment of community care services and it appears to be more usual that each department then proceeds according to its own procedures but may consult with the other. *Part 3 of the 1997 DoE, DoH Joint Guidance Making Partnerships Work in Community Care* gives illustrations of co-operative practice and of joint assessment frameworks including the matter of confidentiality over information sharing.
- 5.** Nevertheless in the following year *Home Alone* from the Audit Commission said in *Para 73* that too often there was no framework of standard procedures for liaison and housing officers not routinely involved in care assessments.
- 6.** The legal framework should be complementary:
 - There is a duty under *S21* of the *National Assistance Act 1948* together with firm direction under *LAC 93/10* make arrangements for providing residential accommodation for people who by reason of age illness, disability or any other circumstances are in need of care and attention which is not otherwise available to them.. This duty is absolute, not to be limited by questions of resources; it may be discharged by providing residential care or a similar service (including housing and support).
 - There is a duty under *S184* of the *Housing Act 1996* towards those who are homeless or threatened with homeless and in priority need (*S189*) as a result of old age, mental illness or handicap, physical disability or other special reason. When someone is assessed as homeless and in priority need for reasons of vulnerability this means they are eligible for assessment under the *Community Care Act 1990* for care services. (Recent advice has suggested that any services recommended by such an assessment must be provided).
- 7.** The *Code of Guidance on Parts VI and VIII of the Housing Act 1996, (para 5.4)* set out the priority categories for allocation schemes for housing applicants requiring additional preference for someone with a need for settled accommodation on health or welfare grounds including (*para 5.10* those who are vulnerable for reasons of old age, physical or mental illness, learning or physical disability).
- 8.** Supporting People has given little attention to how individuals needing support find their way into the system, there is no assessment as there is for either homelessness or community care. For the time being people will depend on whatever selection and assessment processes are offered by approved service providers.

9. The proper course should be through some form of joint assessment by housing and social services but (as it stands) those who do not seek a community care assessment and are not homeless and in priority need have no formal process through which to seek help.

If you require further information or have other queries contact Housing Options.

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