

Date of Meeting 13 January 2021

Document classification: Part A Public Document

Exemption applied: None

Review date for release N/A

---

## Mental Health Strategy for Housing 2021 -2025

### Report summary:

A report examining the Mental health strategy for housing that has been developed over the last two years. This strategy is designed to deal with the increasing demand upon housing services which are mental health related and has been previously reviewed and agreed by a panel of our tenants.

### Is the proposed decision in accordance with:

Budget Yes  No

Policy Framework Yes  No

### Recommendation:

To agree the contents and aims of the strategy as set out within the document.

### Reason for recommendation:

To ensure that the Housing Service is meeting the current and future mental health and well-being needs of our tenants. That as a provider of social housing East Devon District Council (EDDC) fulfils its obligations as set out in Chapter 5 paragraph 93 and Chapter 6 Paragraphs 115 to 119 of the Social Housing White Paper. The Housing Review Board is responsible for maintaining oversight of EDDC's compliance with the Social Housing White Paper and any future legislation arising from the White Paper. This strategy was produced in consultation with representatives of the tenants of EDDC.

Officer: Adam Cornish, Sheltered Housing Manager [acornish@eastdevon.gov.uk](mailto:acornish@eastdevon.gov.uk) 07596888434

---

### Portfolio(s) (check which apply):

- Climate Action and Emergency Response
- Coast, Country and Environment
- Council and Corporate Co-ordination
- Democracy, Transparency and Communications
- Economy and Assets
- Finance
- Strategic Planning
- Sustainable Homes and Communities
- Tourism, Sports, Leisure and Culture

**Equalities impact** Low Impact

**Climate change** Low Impact

**Risk:** Medium Risk; As no legislation has been enacted the risk of non-compliance could be considered low. However, once legislation is in place regulatory action can be taken against EDDC if we are still non-compliant. Therefore, the onus is on EDDC to work towards compliance now so that when legislation comes into force EDDC is ready.

**Links to background information** [The charter for social housing residents: social housing white paper - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

[Mental Health Strategy](#)

**Link to [Council Plan](#)**

---

Priorities (check which apply)

- Better homes and communities for all
- A greener East Devon
- A resilient economy

## **1 Introduction**

1.1 Mental Health problems are widespread but very often hidden from the public eye. One in four adults experiences at least one diagnosable mental health problem in any given year, Mental health represents the largest single cause of disability in the UK (NHS England, 2016). In children we are seeing one in ten aged 5-16 having a diagnosable mental health condition. The support for both adults and children is severely lacking and our professional services are not able to adhere to the demand and support individuals appropriately and, in many cases, convincingly.

1.2 As a housing authority we have been increasingly providing accommodation for people with mental health issues in accordance with our statutory duties. With limited stock of properties and no specialist supported housing other than sheltered housing in our ownership, and very little with other providers, we place as best we can in homes. This can quickly turn into neighbour issues with clashes in lifestyle and we have to try and manage the situation as best we can. Invariably there is no support from other specialist agencies responsible for mental health services and situations escalate, becoming difficult and time consuming for officers to deal with.

1.3 This problem has got gradually worse over the last few years as mental health services and the county's supported housing has been unable to meet the demand, leaving us as a landlord to manage the tensions this creates in the community.

1.4 At the same time these tensions are raised by front line staff who are not ideally equipped to deal with emerging situations, and have been well documented at staff focus groups run across the Housing Service by Karen Jenkins and Mark Williams. We are working to ensure that all our tenants enjoy their home peacefully in accordance with the tenancy conditions we set.

## **2 Our Mental Health Strategy**

2.1 One possible and partial solution has been identified in the form of a specialist worker, experienced in the field of mental health, to carry a small caseload and act as liaison between Housing and Mental Health teams, as well as providing a source of assistance and guidance for staff across all Housing teams. This has already been agreed by the Housing Review Board and provision of £29,577 for a grade 7 officer made in the Housing Revenue Account for the coming year. This post is currently being advertised and it is hoped that we will be able to recruit into the position before Christmas, with the successful applicant commencing in post in the New Year.

2.2 The Housing Mental Health Strategy 2021/2025 contains this objective as well as others designed to help us formalise our approach and focus more intently on this critical area of our work. Some of the objectives we have already made good progress on, for example we have now held our first Mental Health conference which was reported to be welcomed and useful to participants, and we have started to forge positive links with mental health teams in the Health Service.

2.3 As we move into a post pandemic way of working again, wellbeing and mental health must be at the forefront of our re-engagement programmes and working approach across all Housing

teams. Communities have been without social context, community bonding and crucial 'in person' council-to-tenant contact, which encourages trust, positivity and good mental wellbeing. We are pleased to now be regaining these inter-personal relationships and look forward to building them in a positive way over the coming months.

---

**Financial implications:**

The financial implications are discussed within the body of the report and mental health has been a consideration in recent budget setting discussions as a reason to increase staff training budgets.

**Legal implications:**

There are no legal implications on which to specifically comment within the report, however all staff should ensure that they continually update their knowledge of the requirements under the Mental Capacity Act 2005 so that they are enabled if and when they interact with our tenants and their households.