



Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

Title: Safe Places Scheme

Report of: Involvement and Diversity Manager

Purpose of Report

1. To provide committee with a proposal for TGHC to adopt the Safe Places initiative to support our approach to supporting customers through the housing office network.

Background

2. The Safe Place Scheme is a national initiative whereby organisations and venues identify themselves as a Safe Place for people with a learning disability to access in their local community. The scheme uses a nationally recognised sticker displayed in the window of the premises so that people can clearly identify the venue as a Safe Place.
3. The scheme is aimed to provide somewhere that people can go to get help if they are
 - Lost
 - Have lost a bus pass, wallet or purse
 - Had something stolen
 - Are being bullied
 - Are upset about something
4. A local scheme was developed by Gateshead People, who are a self-advocacy group for people with learning disabilities, run by people with learning disabilities. The Safe Places scheme has been supported by the Police and Crime Commissioners Unit and the Learning Disabilities Partnership Board.
5. The scheme was launched in March 2014 and over 60 places have now been registered as a safe place.
6. A report was presented at the Gateshead Health and Wellbeing Board on 16 January to encourage take up of the scheme by partners.

TGHC Role

7. It is proposed that the housing company sign up to the scheme and that all housing offices are registered as a safe place.
8. Training will be provided by Gateshead People to understand the Safe Places scheme and our role and establish the support needs a person with learning disabilities may have.
9. It is proposed that this training and approach goes beyond the Safe Places theme of venues being a safe place for people, and to include other front line officers in the briefings to be able to respond effectively if they come into contact with someone with learning disabilities whilst visiting people's homes.
10. People with learning disabilities can be issued with a card as part of the Safe Places scheme which indicates any support or key workers that can be contacted as necessary. Officers will record any instances of people with these cards coming into the office and requiring assistance and this will be sent back to Gateshead People for monitoring purposes. This information is also being reviewed by the Safer Community Team to highlight any issues regarding learning disability related hate crime.
11. Housing offices will display a Safe Places sticker so that they are easily recognisable to people. They will also be included in Gateshead People's register of Safe Places. In addition we will carry out some additional publicity to raise awareness of the scheme.
12. This will enhance our current approach to dealing with potentially vulnerable customers both through the office network and in any contact employees have with residents.
13. By way of example all housing offices are Hate Crime reporting centres which means that someone can report an incident they believe to be hate crime at any office and this will be logged on Arch and actioned appropriately. In addition employees follow our safeguarding approach of 'If Something Doesn't Look Right' which supports the work to support vulnerable customers and identify potential safeguarding issues and address issues as they arise.
14. The Safe Places initiative will be incorporated into a review of the procedures developed to identify potential safeguarding issues.

Link to values

15. This report links to the following values:
 - Being Caring and respecting
 - Embracing Equality
 - Being customer focussed, innovative

Impact on tenants

16. The aim of this approach is to ensure that people with learning disabilities feel reassured that they have somewhere they can go and someone to speak to if they feel anxious or distressed whilst out and about.

17. This is part of our wider approach to supporting tenants and leaseholders and providing a responsive service to their needs.
18. Our customer profile information shows that around 100 of our main tenants have told us they have a learning disability. However it is anticipated that there will be a significantly higher number of people living in with family who may benefit from our approach.

Risk Management Implications

19. There are no direct risk implications resulting from this report.

Financial Implications

20. There are no financial implications to this report. This approach is on the whole providing a more formal name to something that we already do. As part of signing up to be a safe place, Gateshead People will provide the training and guidance free of charge.

Equality and Diversity Implications

21. This approach supports the objectives of the Single Equality Scheme and ensures that we are supporting our tenants and leaseholders with learning disabilities effectively. The briefing provided to employees will be delivered by people with learning disabilities directly to ensure that the message is clear and employees can understand some of the potential barriers for people in accessing services or communicating, particularly when they are anxious or concerned.

Value for Money Implications

22. There are no direct value for money implications arising from this report.

Health Implications

23. There are no direct health implications arising from this report.

Environmental Implications

24. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

Consultation carried out

25. We will promote our role in Safe Places through our Service Improvement Groups and our customer forums to raise awareness of the scheme among our tenants and leaseholders.

Recommendations

26. The committee is recommended to

- approve the company to sign up all housing offices as Safe Places;
- note the resulting actions that we will do to continue to respond effectively and support vulnerable tenants and leaseholders.

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