**Temporary Accommodation Charter**

**Introduction**

This charter has been developed to ensure decent standards of accommodation and service are provided to homeless households who have to spend time in temporary accommodation. This document sets out the local authority’s expectations, aspirations and commitments to achieve these.

We recognise that providing accommodation and support to homeless people can present significant challenges given the vulnerability of those people and the disruption to their lives that homelessness brings. We are keen therefore to ensure that the accommodation and services provided in Eastbourne to homeless households meet reasonable standards to ensure the best outcomes.

It is also recognised that a significant proportion of people placed in temporary accommodation will have multiple and complex needs and as a result will require additional support. Multiple complex needs is defined by the  Public Health Joint Strategic Needs Assessment steering group (‘JSNA’)  as people aged 16+ experiencing combinations of housing issues/homelessness, substance misuse, offending,  mental health and domestic abuse issues with an overarching focus on complex trauma and equalities.

Exceptions
In exceptional circumstances, homeless households may need to be placed in accommodation not intended for use as temporary accommodation or in accommodation which has not been checked. Whenever this occurs, the council will strive either to move the household as soon as possible to approved accommodation or inspect the property while the household is in residence.

**Length of stay**

We will work together with providers of accommodation, support, advice and other services to ensure the length of time spent by any household in temporary accommodation is kept to a minimum. We will work with people housed in temporary accommodation to ensure their stay is no longer than is required to meet their re-housing and support needs.

At the same time, we will ensure that homeless people placed in supported housing will be given the time and support they need to move on to more independent housing.

We expect homeless people placed in temporary accommodation to cooperate with us to secure longer-term suitable housing for them.

The Council makes every effort to maximise the availability of social and affordable housing in Eastbourne and aims to work as closely as possible with neighbouring authorities to reduce the need to place homeless households in temporary accommodation outside the Borough.

Where we place a homeless person or household outside the Borough, we will make every effort to move them back to the Borough as soon as possible to ensure they are housed close to the services they use and their local networks.

**Minimum Standard of accommodation**

Health and Safety
Providers of temporary housing have legal responsibilities for Health and Safety and will keep written records of their risk assessments and all safety checks and actions undertaken.

Safeguarding Children and Vulnerable Adults
Providers of temporary housing will have up to date policies and procedures on safeguarding children and vulnerable adults which comply with locally agreed standards (Pan Sussex procedures for Child Protection and for Safeguarding Adults).

Staff employed by providers of temporary accommodation will receive appropriate training on safeguarding.

Disrepair
Temporary housing schemes will be maintained in a good state of repair, free of mould and damp, and accessible to all guests where reasonably practical. Any maintenance issues reported by guests should be dealt with as quickly as possible and an order placed for repair within 2 working days with an emergency response within 24 hours.

Bedding
All temporary accommodation units will include enough beds for the household placed there wherever possible, with clean bedding, somewhere to store possessions and clothing, and a chair as a minimum.

Temperature
Temperatures will be comfortable to protect health. The range will vary from person to person, but 18C/64F is the World Health Organisation’s recommended room temperature for healthy people; 20C/68F for older people or very young children; 16C/60.8F for those with allergies or respiratory problems.

Security
Guests should feel safe and secure in their accommodation. Any suspected crime should be recorded and reported immediately to the police.

Rooms and storage areas will be lockable to protect the individual’s or family’s privacy and property.

Wherever families with children are accommodated, a buggy store should be provided if possible.

Noise
Efforts should be made to minimise noise and disturbances.

Cooking facilities
Shared or individual cooking facilities will be made available. If shared, there will be a fully functioning, clean kitchen where residents can store their food securely.

Bathrooms
Bathrooms will be kept clean and will be fully accessible.

Cleaning
Cleaning equipment will be made available to residents to borrow and will be properly maintained. Rooms will be monitored for cleanliness on a regular basis.

Infestation
Every effort should be made to prevent infestations and to deal with any infestations as quickly as possible through contact with the local authority.

**Management**

Providers of temporary housing are expected to treat everyone staying with them as guests. The accommodation is paid for and most residents will be contributing to this payment themselves. All guests should be received in the same way as if they were themselves paying all the costs of the accommodation and services directly themselves.

Staff recruitment and screening
Staff will be selected, checked and trained for work with people with a range of needs and, ideally, will be trained in or familiar with adult and child safeguarding and mental health first aid. They will be appropriately supervised.

Although staff employed by temporary housing providers are not eligible for DBS checks, it is recommended that these staff obtain a basic check:

<https://www.mygov.scot/basic-disclosure/apply-for-basic-disclosure/?via=https://www.disclosurescotland.co.uk/basicdisclosureonline/index.htm>.

This certificate will reveal all unspent criminal conviction information

Abuse and harassment
There should be zero tolerance of abuse, bullying or any form of harassment – either of staff or guests. Residents whose behaviour causes significant disruption to others should be asked to leave.

Feedback
Providers of temporary housing should seek regular feedback from their guests, ideally at the point when they are moving out. A standard questionnaire can be provided. The Council will spot check the responses as part of the regular monitoring checks.

Safe spaces for support
Where the premises allow, the temporary accommodation provider will allocate a private room to be used as a safe space for support services to be delivered such as advice or counselling services.

Where the premises do not allow for this, a nearby location will be identified for this purpose.

**Information and support**

The Council will provide information to households they are placing in temporary accommodation on what they are being offered and what standards they can expect; advising them what they can bring to ensure their stay is as pleasant as possible (e.g. additional bedding, toys, hot water bottles, some kitchen and cleaning equipment); and setting out what is expected of them (payment, standards of behaviour, proactive cooperation in efforts to secure alternative housing for them).

The Council will provide basic information about the names and ages of members of any household placed in the accommodation, terms of payment, and expected length of stay if known.

Where possible and with the consent of the individual, the Council will provide information about the person’s needs and any associated risks. This will include contact details for any support providers currently involved.

All households not already in receipt of support services will be referred to Home Works who will make an assessment of support needs and assist with benefit claims.

The Council will refer all children aged under five to the Health Visitor service to ensure their health needs are met.

The Council will ensure that those placed in emergency accommodation will be informed of their housing rights in the situation.

Occupants will be given sufficient notice of eviction which will be at least 24 hours.

Temporary housing providers will provide information to households on what they offer and the standards residents can expect. Equally, they will explain what is expected of residents regarding payment, standards of behaviour and proactive cooperation in efforts to secure alternative housing for them.

**Monitoring and evaluation of services**

The Council will carry out unannounced spot-checks every 6 months to ensure that housing providers are complying with the minimum standards outlined above. Help and support will be given to achieve compliance but the Council may decide to cease using a provider if the minimum standard is not met within a reasonable period of time. This will be at the Council’s discretion.

**Optimum standards**

The following section sets out preferred standards which we will work towards:

* A mini-fridge should be provided in all rooms.
* Laundry facilities should be provided.
* A nutritious breakfast, including fresh fruit, should be offered.
* Kitchen boxes (containing cutlery and utensils) should be made available on loan on request, subject to the household paying a refundable deposit
* Facilities for cooking and warming baby milk should be provided in all residences and available as required. Wherever possible, this should be in the form of a microwave in the room.
* Drop-in advice and support services should be provided by housing, health, advice and other support agencies to ensure guests are accessing the services and benefits they need to minimise their time in temporary accommodation and the impact of homelessness. This should include support to secure housing in the private rented sector.
* Skills sessions should be offered to prepare people for move-on from their accommodation covering tenancy rights and responsibilities, money management, using the internet to access services, cookery and other life skills. The Council and 3VA may be able to advise voluntary organisations on appropriate funding sources for these services.
* Information about key services and about local opportunities and activities should be made available to guests. This may be on a noticeboard, in leaflet form or as a map and will be provided by local agencies.

**Signed by:**

**Role:**

**On behalf of:**

**Date:**