

Oldham Council Supported Exempt Accommodation Guidance

As a cooperative borough Oldham Council explores opportunities to collaborate and work in partnership to deliver the best results for its residents in the most effective manner. Whilst Oldham Council sees the value of partnerships, we must deliver the best partnerships with the best outcomes for our most vulnerable individuals.

The purpose of this guidance is to outline minimum expectations the Council places on housing (and care) providers seeking to operate in Oldham within supported exempt/specified status. The guidance supports new and existing providers to deliver high standards of sustainable support and care.

In line with this process, organisations will be taken through a two-stage process whereby providers will be given the opportunity to clearly outline their proposal and how it aligns with the Council's strategic aims and objectives.

Stage one is the Gateway Questionnaire which can be requested by contacting supported.housing@oldham.gov.uk. The questionnaire aims to capture as much information about an organisation's governance arrangements, along with details of the proposal so accurate advice and guidance can be offered, as well as insight into demand and alternative delivery methods.

Stage two is accessible to providers that have received endorsement from Housing Strategy or Social Care Colleagues based on their initial proposal and evidence collected in stage one. Unlike stage one which predominantly focuses on partnership, governance and sustainability; stage two focuses on the financial delivery, operational arrangements, funding and the rationale behind all each aspect.

This guidance and incorporated two stage process, enables the Council to accurately assess, review and guide new and existing providers, to ensure service delivery meets the needs of Oldham's most vulnerable residents.

Organisations are encouraged to work through this guidance before introducing new services or expanding existing services in Oldham to promote collaboration and sustainability.

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1 Housing and Adult Social Care Endorsement

Provision of supported accommodation is growing rapidly in Oldham, in order to meet high demand. This is in conjunction with rising levels of homelessness and complex cases across the borough and region. However, it is important for the Local Authority to ensure that those households in need of genuine care and support are being housed adequately and in a timely manner.

Therefore, services seeking to operate in Oldham must notify the Council's Strategic Housing department of their planned provision and how it would help tackle the growing demand. In collaboration with the Council's Revenues and Benefits department the Housing Team and Adult Social Care Service must endorse all new relevant provision, to forge more meaningful relationships with the private sector. Without this, we will not support the application for supported exempt accommodation. This process will also ensure that rents remain affordable to the Council and those in need of care and support.

This also benefits new organisations seeking to operate in Oldham, by presenting an opportunity to gain useful information about the area's needs and demands.

2 Organisation and registration and status

Information relating to the governance and organisational structure must be provided, to satisfy the Council of the status and credibility of your organisation. It is important that you can provide accurate and up to date information to enable the Authority to process your application.

Failure to provide essential information and documentation may affect your application to become a supported exempt housing provider, as the Council would be unable to satisfy itself of the sustainability of your service provision. The requested information will mitigate potential risks and subsequent reputational damage. See examples of acceptable documents below:

- Registered Provider Status
- Private Limited Company Status
- Public Limited Company Status
- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Community Interest Company

3 Company Accounts (audited)

Organisations must at any time, upon request, provide recent record of accounts to validate the economic and financial fitness of their organisation. In order to protect the Council's position and the welfare of all its residents, organisations seeking to operate in the Oldham area must demonstrate their ability to sustainably deliver services.

4 Procurement Strategy

The private housing market in Oldham has grown exponentially and this growth is forecast to continue. Additionally, the Council is working hard to maintain neighbourhood protection and community cohesion, hence the Council requires new and existing organisations to demonstrate their understanding of Oldham's local rental market in connection with local schemes, statutory requirements, strategies, policies and corporate values.

An organisation shall disclose its acquisition method (with cost modelling) in procuring suitable properties in the Borough. This will allow the Council to evaluate whether the proposed method of procurement is considered sustainable within the context of Oldham.

5 Tenancy and Lease Agreements

Organisations must disclose at the earliest opportunity to the Authority, the type of agreement supported tenants will be issued with. Organisations are also expected to provide a specimen agreement for review by the Authority.

5.1 Legal Interest

An organisation must also set out what interest it holds in the property, on which they can issue tenancies and/or licenses. Companies must clearly identify themselves as the Freeholder, Leaseholder or holder of a sub-lease.

6 Selective Licence Scheme

Oldham Council operates a Selective Licence (SL) scheme in eight areas of the borough. Introduced in 2015, SL uses legislation under the Housing Act 2004 to enforce minimum Health & Safety standards and property management standards on privately rented properties. More information about SL can be found here on the council's website . Private landlords must ensure they are aware of their responsibilities under Selective Licensing. Accommodations that are located outside of Selective Licence areas are required to comply with the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) standards.

7 Management Agreements

Where the housing provider has partnered with a care/support provider to provide on-site care and support, the Council expects to see an example of the management agreement between the landlord and organisation providing the support and care. The agreement should identify which party is responsible for health & fire safety, risk assessment and repairs and maintenance. All of these requirements should be considered in line with Government Guidance and within the context of COVID-19.

8 Housing Support Plans

Organisations must clearly describe the level of support customers will receive throughout their tenure and who will be providing the support and care, i.e. the organisation itself or a third party.

As a minimum, the Council expects to see a support plan which relates to eligible Housing Benefit (HB) tasks around the intensive housing management and tenancy sustainment support.

Housing support plans should set out aims, with clear outcomes for identified client groups. Organisations should ensure there is a process in place to capture each client's:

- Needs and requirements
- Progress
- Risks
- Outcomes Assessment Criteria (acceptance and refusal)
- Action Plans
- Key milestones and goal setting models

Organisations must ensure that progress made by their tenants is tracked and can be shared with the Council upon request, in order to evidence the service that is being provided meets the needs of the individual and identified client group.

As part of the support and care plans, service providers must also adopt a move-on strategy for relevant clients capable of progressing into independent living. Service providers must demonstrate they have regard to any welfare and safeguarding concerns in respect of their tenants to ensure they are re-housed into sustainable accommodation.

In addition, where care and housing related support provision is commissioned separately, we would expect care and support plans to represent specific care and support needs, over and above those eligible to be funded under HB.

9 Equality, Social, Economic and Environmental Value

Organisations must commit to operating in a legal and ethical manner. As a Local Authority, Oldham promotes an inclusive economy for businesses and residents to thrive in, therefore we want to attract and work with organisations that share this belief and will commit to developing this agenda as part of their service provision.

In seeking to deliver services in Oldham Borough, as a minimum, organisations must ensure their service meet the below legislative guidelines and regulations:

- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Children Act 1989

- Children Act 2004
- National Minimum Wage (Amendment) Regulations 2016

10 Experience and References

Organisations with extensive knowledge and experience would be highly desirable, as this would reduce the risk of poor service delivery. However, without excluding organisations that lack the experience in this field, Oldham Council will enter into discussion with organisations that meet the specified requirements and are driven by a commitment to deliver services that are tailored to the needs and requirements of Oldham residents.

To avoid disappointment, the Council encourages all applicant organisations to be thorough and submit accurate and up to date information and documentation, in order to satisfy the Council of their credibility and suitability to operate a service in Oldham. If documents are found to be inaccurate or insufficient, it will hinder the progress of any application.

11. Quality Assurance and Monitoring

The Authority is committed to a high quality standard of services in Oldham. Recognised accreditation of incoming and existing providers offers assurance to the Authority and potential service users. Whilst the absence of recognised accreditation will not preclude any organisations from being considered, accreditation will give weight to an application via this gateway process.

12. General Data Protection Regulations (UK GDPR) 2018

All organisations must be GDPR compliant and must provide upon request an up to date GDPR Policy.

If you have any questions or would like to progress through the Gateway, please contact: Supported.Housing@oldham.gov.uk