

# thirteen

Independent Living Policy

<b>Company</b>	Thirteen
<b>Lead Manager</b>	Nigel Moses
<b>Date of Final Draft and Version Number</b>	23.09.19
<b>Review Date</b>	September 2021
<b>Officer Responsible for Review</b>	Nigel Moses

### Policy Review History

<b>Version</b>	<b>Action &amp; Changes</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Date</b>
1	New policy	NM/GS	
2	Policy review	NM/LJ	

## 1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 This policy applies to existing and new customers of Thirteen Housing Group.

This policy will ensure that clarity is provided to both customers, staff and the local authorities areas in which we operate in terms of the principles of our specialist rehousing service and delivery of a home adaptation service, which benefits the diverse needs of our vulnerable and medically challenged customers.

- 1.2 The service provides an inclusive, fair and consistent approach for customers and local authorities. This is achieved by ensuring that service delivery is efficient, timely and sensitive; provides value for money; and protects both the customer's independence and the long-term viability of the asset.

Statutory duty of care lies with Local Authorities. In line with company values, Thirteen Group commits to providing an enhanced level of service to our vulnerable customers to enable them to remain independent in their homes for as long as possible.

We believe Independent Living as a service is about much more than just aids and adaptations. As such, the Independent Living Team operates under the following principles:

- Focuses on choice, flexibility and tailored to customers' personal requirements, with a key commitment of reducing admissions into funded residential or health care settings.
- Delivers a customer-focussed experience which provides a single point of contact and an empathetic response.
- Takes an unbiased, ethical approach, working with partners in the Health and Social Care Services to ensure customers' needs are effectively met.
- Considers the situation of each customer is considered individually in order to provide a bespoke service to all.
- Is open and transparent in providing housing solutions that are reasonable, practical and meet the needs of the customer and their family, in partnership with the Local Authority as and when necessary.
- Provides these solutions in line with our Value for Money commitment and within the parameters of available funding.

## 2 REFERENCE MATERIAL

- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Thirteen Asset Management Strategy
- Thirteen Development and Regeneration Strategy
- Thirteen Lettings Policy
- Thirteen Safeguarding policies and procedures
- Thirteen Older People Strategy

## 3 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 **Adaptation** – An alteration or addition made to a property to enable the occupant/s to live independently within the accommodation and mitigate the effects of a disability or health issue.
- 3.2 **Advocate** – A person whom the customer has given the Group permission to speak to and/or make decisions on their behalf.
- 3.3 **Customer** – for the purposes of this policy, 'customer' extends to current and prospective tenants of Thirteen and their family (who also live in the household registered on the electoral

register at the time of the request, and for a minimum of two years prior if they are aged over 18).

**3.4 Stakeholder** – An external organisation who may be involved in the Independent Living processes in some way (e.g. Local Authorities, NHS, support agencies).

**3.5 Vulnerable** - Any resident or service user who is, or may be in need of community care services by reasons of mental health, or other disability, age, or illness, and is or may be unable to take care of him or herself, or unable to protect him or herself against significant harm or exploitation' (*Definition taken from the Department of Health document 'No secrets: guidance on developing and implementing multi-agency policies and procedures to protect vulnerable adults from abuse'*).

**3.6 Medical Priority** – priority on My Thirteen to bid on properties on the grounds of mental health, physical health, learning disabilities and or when personal circumstances are detrimental to a customer's health.

**3.7 Minor Adaptation** – Work up to the value of £1500 where no major structural alteration or planning is required.

**3.8 Major Adaptation** – Work over the value of £1500 which may include considerable structural alterations and planning to complete,

## 4 POLICY CONTENTS

### 4.1 Our Approach to Independent Living.

4.1.1 The Independent Living Service is available to existing and prospective customers of the Thirteen Group, who are experiencing difficulties within their current home. This could be due to a physical condition which limits access to basic facilities, including living space, bathing and general access to the property, or various other types of vulnerability, including but not limited to learning difficulties and mental health problems.

4.1.2 The service has two strands:  
The provisions of adaptations appropriate to current housing stock to allow the customer to remain independent or to assist carers to carry out their role within the home for longer, reduce the risk of injury in the home. The provision of a specialist rehousing service (see 4.3) to more suitable accommodation will be facilitated where this is the most appropriate option.

4.1.3 We will endeavour to find viable options to meet the needs of our customers and achieve the outcomes recommended by health and social care professionals. In doing so, consideration must be given to protecting or enhancing our asset for future use, in line with the Asset Management Strategy.

4.1.4 We will take a holistic approach to customer care in the Independent Living Service. Our customers are individuals with a diverse range of requirements; therefore, our interactions with customers and their advocates must be as bespoke as the solutions we provide. We will take the customer's feelings and situation into account at every point of contact and ensure they (or a named advocate) are kept up to date on progress at the appropriate stages of the customer journey.

## **4.2 The Adaptations Service**

- 4.2.1 Access to the Independent Living Service can be accessed in a number of ways, including via a referral from a health or social care professional, Thirteen Officers or directly from the customer.
- 4.2.2 Requests for adaptations are assessed by the Local Authority or an NHS Occupational Therapist and agreed with the Independent Living Team, the Asset Management Team and the customer.
- 4.2.3 Decisions are based on the customer's needs and preferences, and what is reasonably practicable within the property. Consideration is given to value for money/financial feasibility of the proposed adaptation, as well as the long-term welfare of the customer, other household members and their access to care and support.
- 4.2.4 Our policy is to always offer the customer and their family the most appropriate and practical solution. The customer is not bound to accept that solution and they can, if necessary, request a review of that decision with an appropriate officer or manager.
- 4.2.5 Where a decision is reached to adapt the current home in line with the recommendations from the OT's assessment, adaptations may be carried out by the Group and its contractors, or an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) may be made to the Local Authority.
- 4.2.6 Each Local Authority has its own funding arrangements and therefore procedures and timescales for work to be done may differ between Local Authorities. We will endeavour to minimise any impact on the customer by working in partnership with the relevant Local Authority, Health and Social Care departments to achieve the desired outcome.
- 4.2.7 Adaptations undertaken by Thirteen are prioritised as follows:
- High Risk: Immediate risk of injury or rapid decline of condition with little or no access to the property and basic facilities.
  - Low Risk: Poor access to the property and basic facilities due to age related or medical health needs.
  - Current timescales are taken from the point of decision to provide adaptations by the ILT to the completion and approval of the required works.
- 4.2.8 We monitor our capital grant spend in each local authority to ensure resources are fairly distributed throughout the financial year.
- 4.2.9 Where adaptation is not a viable option, we will endeavor to provide an alternative solution through re-housing to accommodation which is more appropriate or has been previously adapted to meet the customers' needs.

## **4.3 The Specialist Rehousing Service.**

- 4.3.1 Customers using the My Thirteen lettings route are supported to move to a more suitable home if this is the most appropriate option. This is usually when adaptation is not feasible in their current accommodation, by self-referral from a customer who wants to move.
- 4.3.2 Priority for rehousing on medical grounds will be given based on the urgency of the customer's situation and in line with guidelines set out in the Group's Lettings Policy. We will assess the need in conjunction with further information from medical professionals and evidence from relevant sources.

- 4.3.3 Customers can use their “My Thirteen” housing status to bid for accommodation with existing adaptations or the Independent Living Team will consider a management let for general needs accommodation that could be adapted.
- 4.3.4 Adapted and level access accommodation is in high demand with limited availability. In line with the Thirteen Lettings Procedures, customers will be supported in identifying more suitable accommodation through “My Thirteen” and will be expected to accept a reasonable offer of accommodation that meets their requirements (either of a property they have applied for or been directly offered). If that offer is refused, their application may be reviewed.
- 4.3.5 We will also work in conjunction with other Thirteen departments, where their services may be more appropriate for the customer, and with colleagues in other organisations, including the Local Authority, to ensure we can help the customer to find the best solution for their needs.
- 4.3.6 In exceptional and appropriate circumstances (for example, where a customer needs to move on urgent medical grounds but is unable to move to a new property independently), consideration may be given to offer financial or practical support to facilitate the move. The decision as to whether such support is required will be made by the Independent Living Team prior to the customer accepting the property.

#### **4.4 Empty Properties and Relets of Adapted/Specialised Property.**

- 4.4.1 When an adapted property becomes available for re-let, the Independent Living Team will assess the level and standard of adaptation to ascertain whether the property is to be advertised with preference to those applicants who require these facilities or to be let as general needs. This will be done in line with the Group’s Lettings Policy.
- 4.4.2 If an adapted property cannot be let in its current state, some adaptations may be removed and recycled, or improved as is appropriate. Alternatively, the property may be passed to the Lettings Team to advertise as general needs accommodation with adaptations which in general will not be removed.
- 4.4.3 The Allocation of adapted properties will be completed by the ILT who will manage the advertising on “My Thirteen” or make the decision to nominate to the relevant local Authority as per the nomination’s agreement.

#### **4.5 Development and Investment.**

- 4.5.1 When new schemes are developed by the Group which include accommodation for our more vulnerable clients, the Independent Living Team will be consulted on the most appropriate layouts, components and equipment for the intended customer group in order to ensure the long-term viability of the development.
- 4.5.2 During investment works where customers are identified as requiring alternative components to those currently present in the property, the Independent Living Team will support the process to ensure that the most appropriate solution is identified to promote future independence within the accommodation.

#### **4.6 Staff Training**

- 4.6.1 Staff in Independent Living work with some of our most vulnerable customers. As such, we will ensure that relevant training and development is arranged via the People Team and that Independent Living Officers are fully competent and compliant with the Thirteen Safeguarding policies and procedures.

## 4.7 Performance and monitoring

Performance information is summarized regularly through our in-house Data Base. Customer Satisfaction is monitored and shared in our public documents.

## 5 GOVERNANCE INFORMATION

<b>Equality and Diversity</b>	
<b>Customer Involvement and Consultation</b>	<p>Consultation sessions with a number of involved customers were carried out in conjunction with the Projects and Planning team. Information from these sessions has been used to compile the policy content and ensure concerns are addressed.</p> <p>Consultation also to be carried out with the following groups: Staff; Heads of Service; partner organisations and Leadership team.</p>
<b>Monitoring and Review</b>	Thirteen Group will undertake an initial review of this Policy after 3 years, or whenever there are any relevant changes to legislation, to ensure its suitability in identifying vulnerable residents and that Thirteen and its employees are able to react to their needs.
<b>Responsibility</b>	<p>Head of Service – Overall implementation of the policy.</p> <p>Independent Living Manager/Team Leader - Operational delivery of the policy and associated procedures.</p> <p>Policy and Contracts Manager – Evaluation and review of the policy.</p>

### *For use by the Governance team*

<b>Date agreed by Thirteen Group Board</b>	17 April 2020
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