

Know our Customer – understanding vulnerability resident feedback

Background

- The Know our Customer project intends to ensure the data we hold about our residents is useful and can help us tailor our service to them
- We want to improve the processes for capturing important data in line with regulatory requirements
- We also wish to develop customer segmentation or ‘profiles’ based on needs, expectations and preferences to develop more tailored services
- An immediate priority workstream to this project is focussing on improving the quality of ‘vulnerability’ information we have on our residents and the service around that up-to-date information

Consultation

- Consultation aim was to test perception of how we support residents with vulnerability, the language around ‘vulnerability’ itself and the draft icons developed for My Account.
- As well as a survey, there was also a repairs communication focus group in May 2025, that the project team attended. Residents were asked similar questions to the survey.
- The focus group also reviewed revised icons following ongoing meetings and conversations with staff and wider research on the housing and health sector.
- 80 residents responded to this consultation via the survey and focus group.

Feedback headlines from consultation

General sentiment

- Strong perception that we need to do more to support residents with needs or personal circumstances that may require a service adjustment
- 73% of online responders don’t believe we currently provide adequate services
- More positive sentiment about the quality of service was felt by residents who responded via the paper version from sheltered and supported accommodation
- Sentiment in the online survey around apparent lack of awareness or respect from contractors, frustration at Notting Hill Genesis for not considering non-visible vulnerabilities, and little recognition around things like religious or cultural practice.
- Residents in the online survey showed frustration having to continuously repeat information to us about their disability, need or personal circumstance.

- Broader sentiment around general poor quality of service and specifically repairs were also captured in the focus group.

<i>I will be completely honest I think NHG are doing quite well with the current provision for people with vulnerabilities.</i>	<i>Contractors who have visited my flat recently and over the past 12 months including gas safety inspection, electrical testing all confirmed to me that they had no information about the vulnerability, disability or health status of the resident and certainly no information about me</i>	<i>I have trouble with my speech and many people assume I am under the influence of something when I speak to them on the phone and I think this makes the staff impatient with me.</i>
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Icons

- Clear understanding on the purpose and value of introducing clear icons to capture information.
- Almost half of residents from the survey called for better information to go alongside these icons.
- Although many understood what the icons were, general feeling from the survey and focus group that many types of need or circumstances were missing from the list of 16.
- Residents from the survey gave examples such as grief, addiction and English as a second language as important things to be able to capture.
- The focus group attendees felt that fewer, broader icons would be better - clearer and more accessible with opportunity for detail underneath.
- Residents in the survey cited mental health the most often as an important circumstance for us to support residents with. Physical mobility was mentioned often as well and elderly which came up in the paper surveys too.

<i>I think it's very clear in that the images are meant to reflect various vulnerabilities and people chose which one are appropriate for them.</i>	<i>They are too generalised, they label people, and in principle I wouldn't support the use of them. For example, if you're "elderly" you might not like</i>	<i>They need better guidelines and we need you to understand what those symbols mean i.e. a symbol of a child and</i>
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	<i>the label particularly if it means people think you're a doddering walker with a stick when you don't even use one. I don't understand the "walking aid" symbol - people with mobility challenges may dislike being objectified in this way.</i>	<i>breathing ! Not much thought gone into it at all</i>
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Language

- Residents made suggestions for alternative language or phrases for 'vulnerability'. Residents in the workshop felt that 'vulnerability' despite its use in the sector, may invite stigma.
- Terms such as *support requirements, personal considerations, assistance preferences* were offered.
- The term "service adjustments" was workshopped in the focus group as a suitable term that describes a particular need, protected characteristic or personal circumstance that may require a change or alteration to the delivery and experience of that service.

<i>Not concerned about the language but being listened to and being shown empathy and understanding is the most important thing to me.</i>	<i>Language around that appears to change all the time. Framing it positively or more neutrally [would be better].</i>	<i>Vulnerability isn't inclusive. It puts a baggage on the people and does what we shouldn't really be doing - "othering".</i>
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Other comments

- Residents also made it clear that they needed clarification on what a service adjustment would look like in reality.
- Residents also highlighted concerns around ensuring that contractors are made aware of what the service adjustment is, not the specific nature of the condition or disability.

- System and process is one thing, but residents highlighted the importance of attitude and behaviours of staff and contractors and the need for good training around this subject area.

<i>All NHG staff should undergo a training course that focuses on understanding residents with health conditions and disability especially how to support residents with multiple conditions.</i>	<i>The purpose appears to be creating a standardised system for residents to self-identify needs that may require accommodation when receiving services. However, the introduction could more explicitly state how this information will be used to improve service delivery and what specific accommodations or support might be available.</i>	<i>Consenting to this data is one thing, but the training and attitudes of staff/contractors is the real issue. And robust process to report bad attitudes or handling or stigmatisation of residents with proper implications.</i>
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Next steps

- Develop this new functionality to allow residents' services adjustment to be logged on their My Account by their housing officer or property manager
- Reduce the number of icons to six with opportunity to give detail, as well as 'prefer not to say' and 'none'
- Develop guidance for housing officers to capture this information properly but sensitively including ensuring the correct information is shared with contractors
- Aiming to have this up and running in summer with further information for residents to be shared in due course