

## HOUSING CORPORATION REGULATORY CIRCULAR



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*Note: 'housing association' is used as a generic term for registered social landlords (RSLs). 'Corporation' means Housing Corporation.*

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**TITLE:**                    **The Housing Corporation's definitions of housing association supported housing and housing for older people**

**SUMMARY:**            **The purpose of the definitions is to enable housing associations to categorise their housing for rent as either general needs housing or supported housing or housing for older people within the Housing Corporation's regulatory, data collection and investment systems.**

### **THIS CIRCULAR IS FOR THE ATTENTION OF:**

All Registered Social Landlords; excluding co-ownership societies  
Local Authorities  
Registered Social Landlords' Auditors  
Registered Social Landlords' Solicitors

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#### **1.0 Legislation, Regulation and Policy Requirements**

This circular applies to all housing associations excluding co-ownership societies. It should be read by all housing associations which own or manage supported housing, housing for older people or general needs housing for rent.

This circular replaces Circular R1-11/99 and provides new Housing Corporation definitions of supported housing and housing for older people.

The definitions are necessary for us to ensure appropriate regulation and funding of housing association stock. The definitions enable housing associations to categorise within the Housing Corporation's regulatory, data collection and investment systems their housing for rent as supported housing, housing for older people, or general needs housing.

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This categorisation must be in full accordance with the guidance set out below. The Corporation may, by exception, require an association which has inappropriately classified its stock to re-designate it. However, please note 3.1 below regarding CORE in 2004/05.

### 2.0 Definitions

#### 2.1 Definition of supported housing

There are two types of supported housing:

**Purpose designed supported housing; and  
Designated supported housing.**

The term 'supported housing' applies to purpose designed or designated supported housing. The delivery of support under the Supporting People framework does not necessarily result in the categorisation of housing as supported if the property is not purpose designed or designated for a particular client group. In the absence of either of these two conditions, housing is general needs.

The design features which distinguish the two types of supported housing that interest the Housing Corporation are listed below.

##### 2.1.1 Purpose Designed Supported Housing:

Buildings that are purpose designed or remodelled to enable residents to adjust to independent living or to enable them to live independently and which require specific design features. There must be support services provided by the landlord or another organisation. At a minimum, a building or scheme must have the following:

**Facilities:** The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for residents or washing machines in living units provided by the landlord. The scheme must also have a communal lounge.

**Design features:** The entrance area into the building, communal areas and some living units must be designed to wheelchair user standards.

##### 2.1.2 Designated Supported Housing:

Buildings with some or no special design facilities and features but that are designated for a specific client group with support services in place to enable them to adjust to independent living or to enable them to live independently.

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### 2.2 Definition of housing for older people

There are three types of housing for older people:

- Housing for older people (all special design features);**
- Housing for older people (some special design features);**
- Designated supported housing for older people**

Properties should be described as housing for older people if they are intended for older people (regardless of the actual characteristics of each tenant) and they either incorporate the range of basic facilities and special design features set out below or are specially designated supported housing for older people. The distinctive design features should be over and above lifetime homes adaptations to general needs properties. The age of tenants actually resident is not a defining feature.

Tenants in housing for older people (**all** special design features) or housing for older people (**some** special design features) should have access to support services as need arises to enable them to live in the property for the rest of their lifetimes.

Access to support means that at a minimum, a process is in place to assist in accessing and/or signposting tenants to support services that they need. Except in the case of 'designated supported housing for older people', the delivery of or level of support is not a defining feature.

The three types of housing for older people are described below.

#### 2.2.1 Housing for older people (all special design features)

Remodelled or purpose built grouped housing that has **all** the basic facilities and **all** special design features intended to enable people to live there for their lifetimes. **All** the following requirements have to be met:

**Basic facilities:** The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for residents and/or washing machines in living units or provision for washing machines to be installed. The scheme must also have a communal lounge.

**Special design features:**

- The whole scheme including entrances and the buildings that comprise it must be designed to wheelchair user standards;
- Living units must have walk in showers or bathrooms adapted for people with mobility problems or wheelchair users.
- Bathrooms in living units that are wheelchair standard must meet the criteria for adapted bathrooms;

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- Living units must have kitchens that are designed to wheelchair standards;
- The scheme must have a bathroom with provision for assisted bathing;
- If there is more than one storey there must be a lift.

### 2.2.2 Housing for older people (some special design features)

Remodelled or purpose built grouped housing that has **all** the basic facilities and at least **one or more** of the special design features listed below. Residents must have access to support services to enable them to live there for their lifetimes. In addition, if there is more than one storey there must be a lift.

***Basic Facilities:*** The scheme or main building must have basic facilities of a laundry for residents and/or washing machines in living units or provision for washing machines to be installed. The scheme must have a communal lounge.

***Special Design Features:***

- Living units have walk in showers or bathrooms adapted for people with mobility problems or wheelchair users.
- Bathrooms in wheelchair standard living units meet the criteria for adapted bathrooms;
- The living units, the entrance area into the building and communal areas are designed to wheelchair user standards.

### 2.2.3 Designated supported housing for older people:

Buildings with **none** of the special design facilities and features listed above but which provide accommodation designated for older people requiring support, with support services provided by the landlord or another organisation.

## 2.3 Further interpretation and clarification of the definitions

### 2.3.1 Care homes

Under the Care Standards Act 2000, the National Care Standards Commission defines care homes under service categories. In line with this the Corporation makes the following distinctions:

- a) 'Care homes providing personal care' fall within the definition of social housing and are either purpose designed supported housing or housing for older people (all special design features).

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b) 'Care homes providing nursing care' are excluded from the definition of social housing and are therefore outside the definitions of supported housing and housing for older people.

### **2.3.2 Care or support services provided by other agencies**

The provision of care or support services to a resident such as domiciliary care is not in itself grounds for classifying the stock as supported housing or housing for older people. One of the above definitions must be met.

### **2.3.3 Night shelters**

Night shelters which only provide accommodation overnight or a very short term resting place and give no written occupancy agreement are considered not to be social housing and therefore not supported housing. Those night shelters which constitute a home and provide a written occupancy agreement will be considered as social housing and, provided one of the above definitions is met, should be categorised as supported housing.

### **2.3.4 Floating support and move-on accommodation**

The term 'supported housing' **excludes** floating or move-on support within general needs stock.

## **3.0 Corporation Expectations**

### **3.1 Regulatory and other returns and regulatory implications**

Housing associations are required to report to the Corporation consistently on supported housing stock and housing for older people throughout their accounts, financial reports and plans (FV5 and FV3), Regulatory and Statistical Return and the CORE system.

#### **Regulatory and Statistical Return and RSL accounts**

Stock defined as supported housing or housing for older people will be treated together for the purpose of performance indicators.

#### **CORE**

Stock defined as housing for older people is considered a subset of supported housing within the CORE system.

### **IMPORTANT NOTE:**

The definitions set out in the 2004/05 CORE guidance are not consistent either with this Circular or with the RSR 2005 return. 'Designated supported housing for older people', will be classified as 'general needs' not 'supported' in CORE for 2004/05. This is a transition period until 1 April 2005 when CORE guidance will be amended.

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### **3.2 Investment implications**

The Housing Corporation will pay Social Housing Grant to capital fund supported housing and housing for older people. As with all capital funding, projects must meet the Regional Housing Strategies and follow the bids and allocations process for the whole capital funding programme.

### **4.0 Assessing Compliance**

Associations are expected to make their own assessment of compliance with our regulatory requirements and to report this to the Corporation. We expect that this assessment will take account of:

- a) any relevant issues identified in reviews or other work on which governing boards base their annual Statement on Internal Controls Assurance.
- b) any relevant issues identified by an associations' external auditor during the preparation and audit of annual accounts

### **5.0 Enquiries about this circular**

Please direct any enquiries about this circular to the regulation team at the appropriate regional office of the Housing Corporation.