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## 5. Specialist and supported housing

### 5.1 What do we mean by specialist and supported housing?

A broad definition of specialist and supported housing (SSH) is that it is specialist accommodation for a group of people with specific needs or characteristics. SSH can be aimed at or designated for a specified group or groups, and it can be designed to meet a specific need or needs. Specialist housing refers to any housing designed and managed for a specific client group or groups. Some specialist housing may also be considered supported housing. That is, housing where access to care, support or supervision is provided alongside accommodation, where needed, to help people live as independently as possible. SSH can also be community-led. Providers are always invited to discuss with their GLA area team representative if they think a proposal may meet the criteria for SSH.

This chapter will refer to SSH unless there are principles and provisions that are specific to either specialist or supported housing.

### 5.2 Client groups

Some of the broad client groups that SSH provides for are listed below. This list is not exhaustive. Individuals and households may have characteristics which mean they belong to more than one client group (such as people with a physical disability who are fleeing domestic abuse) and their needs should be met appropriately.

- older people
- young single parents and young women who are pregnant (usually aged less than 20) needing support

- young people (usually aged 16-25) who are homeless or in insecure accommodation
- young people leaving local authority care who have been looked after for a continuous period of at least 13 weeks after the age of 14
- people with physical, sensory, learning, or other disabilities who may have the need for specially designed accommodation, have support needs to sustain their accommodation, live independently, or both
- people experiencing diagnosed or undiagnosed mental health conditions who may have support needs to sustain their accommodation, live independently or both; this may include people who have had or are having specialist treatment
- people with a long-term condition who may have support needs to sustain their accommodation or live independently; this may include, for instance, people with dementia, HIV/AIDS or Parkinson's disease
- people experiencing, who have experienced, or are at risk of experiencing domestic violence and/or abuse
- victims and survivors of violence against women and girls, or those at risk of experiencing it, which may include, amongst other types of violence, 'honour'-based violence and sexual exploitation
- military veterans with support needs to sustain their accommodation, live independently or both
- rough sleepers, former rough sleepers, or people at risk of rough sleeping
- homeless families or individuals who may or may not be owed a homeless duty by their local housing authority, former homeless families, or individuals at risk of homelessness
- offenders, people at risk of offending, or people leaving prison, who may have support needs to sustain their accommodation or live independently
- future residents of community-led housing and/or other self-defined groups that may have in common a connection to the local area or community, and/or shared characteristics; these groups may share specific housing requirements or support needs
- gypsies and travellers
- refugees, people with humanitarian protection, people with exceptional leave to remain

- people with substance abuse and misuse issues, who may have support needs to sustain their accommodation, live independently or both
- people with multiple complex needs who need support to maintain their independence.

### 5.3 Types of SSH

As there are several client groups for SSH, there are also many different types of SSH, for example: self-contained homes; forms of shared accommodation such as hostels and refuges; or provision of pitches and stopping places for travelling households.

These may have specific design requirements and/or may include on-site or floating support. SSH may also refer to housing that does not provide support or has specific design requirements, but that is designated for a specific client group or groups.

SSH projects should respond to evidence of need and defined priorities locally, sub-regionally or regionally; for example, in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments and homelessness strategies, and be supported by the local authority. The AHP is also open to funding community-led housing projects under SSH where such projects fall within the parameters of the relevant AHP.

As individuals and households may have characteristics from more than one client group, SSH projects will also need to consider how they can best meet a complex set of needs. The GLA welcomes bids for projects that:

- address multiple needs
- can house more than one client group (where considered appropriate)
- deliver SSH alongside general needs housing
- achieve social integration for those accessing SSH – for example through multigenerational communal on-site facilities and amenities.

The AHP can fund projects that deliver SSH through new build as well as through the repurposing or re-improvement of existing homes. As with funding for new provision, projects delivered through repurposing or re-improvement of existing homes should demonstrate value for money and evidence that they will meet local, sub-regional or regional needs over the long term.

The GLA also encourages projects to deliver new and innovative types of SSH, which may incorporate new technologies and design principles that help to deliver appropriate levels of support for Londoners. More information on tenure and design

requirements is provided below.

Within the AHP, much of the guidance for general needs housing will also apply to SSH. The key differences that apply for SSH funded through the AHP are outlined below:

- While the Mayor's preferred rental product is Social Rent, to maximise supply, the GLA may fund SSH at Affordable Rent levels where this is essential for viability and if still genuinely affordable.
- It should be evidenced that total housing costs, including service charges, are and will remain genuinely affordable to the intended client group(s) in their specific financial circumstances.
- Providers are also invited to discuss with their GLA area team representative whether other tenures or housing models would be appropriate for SSH under the AHP including shared ownership, discounted market sale and co-ops.
- Investment partners providing SSH at Social Rent and Affordable Rent levels delivered through the AHP 2021-26 will be exempt from providing the Right to Shared Ownership to tenants. For community-led housing, where the landlord or freeholder is a Community Land Trust, they will also be exempt.
- SSH can be developed not only through new build but also through the repurposing or re-improvement of existing homes

### 5.4 Design

Different SSH projects will have different design requirements, as design will often play a key role in addressing client groups' needs.

The GLA recognises that SSH projects may not be able to meet the design standards of the relevant AHPs given the need to implement design principles that are tailored for specific client groups and/or in the context of particular viability constraints for SSH projects. SSH projects that cannot feasibly or viably meet all design standards due to specific and evidenced requirements to meet the needs of residents may be exempted at the GLA's discretion from the requirement to comply with the relevant AHP standards. SSH delivered through remodelling or refurbishment of existing housing to bring it up to the required specialist housing standards, which cannot feasibly or viably meet all AHP design standards, may be exempted at the GLA's discretion from the relevant design standards. Investment Partners will need to discuss exemptions in

conjunction with the GLA's Supported and Specialist Housing team and have confirmation of any exemption ahead of bids being assessed for approval. Further guidance on the GLA's Design and Sustainability standards, including exemption framework, can be found on [london.gov](https://www.london.gov).

The GLA encourages bids to take into account best-practice principles outlined by the [Housing our Ageing Population: Panel for Innovation \(HAPPI\)](#): these are especially relevant for housing for older people and for people with disabilities, but they may also be useful for other SSH client groups. The [Housing Learning and Improvement Network \(LIN\)](#) has further resources and guidance on different types of SSH. The list below is not exhaustive and the GLA welcomes innovative principles for SSH.

### **Housing for older people and for people with disabilities**

Housing for older people and for people with disabilities should incorporate the [HAPPI principles](#). Bids can follow, for instance, models such as extra care and sheltered housing. Projects should include individual dwellings with their own front door and flexibility to adapt or install equipment or assistive technology in the home. In addition, bids are welcomed for wheelchair accessible and wheelchair adaptable homes, as well as other adapted housing. At a minimum, accessibility should be in line with wider AHP and planning requirements. Projects for older people should also include communal areas such as a lounge.

### **Move-on accommodation / pathways to independent living**

Move-on accommodation should meet a minimum of 37 square metres for single person units as per the London Plan. Smaller homes may be eligible for funding on an exceptional basis where there is exemplary design, and the proposal contributes to achievement of other objectives. For new build, the absolute minimum size is 24 square metres for single person units, provided these are purpose-designed and the design of the scheme presents robust justification for it. The absolute minimum space requirement for existing self-contained single person units that are acquired, refurbished, or remodelled is 26 square metres.

### **Hostels and refuges**

For hostels and refuges for rough sleepers, those at risk of sleeping rough, other homeless people (without statutory status as homeless) and victims and survivors of domestic abuse, there is an expectation that private living spaces in new builds will have a total floor space of no less than 12.5 square metres per unit. Private living

spaces within refurbished projects should have a minimum floor space of no less than 10.5 square metres. The GLA expects all units to have an en-suite bathroom and/or contain cooking facilities and providers unable to achieve this will need to clearly demonstrate why this is the case.

Projects for parents with dependants are expected to provide private living spaces that can accommodate a parent and child. As a minimum, projects will need to demonstrate how the design of the hostel or refuge will allow families to be accommodated together (for example, through the use of partition doors to allow rooms to be connected).

The height of the units should be a minimum of 2.5 metres, although some flexibility will be permitted on refurbishment projects. There is an expectation that hostels and refuges will have communal spaces. The GLA also expects providers to ensure that residents in hostel and refuge projects are able to access the internet.

For refuges for victims of domestic abuse, it is particularly important that design ensures the physical security of the building, with newly-built or refurbished safe accommodation meeting Secured by Design requirements and surveys by the Metropolitan Police's Designing Out Crime Officers undertaken where appropriate.

### **Gypsies and travellers' accommodation**

Sites for gypsies and travellers' accommodation should offer hot and cold-water supply; electricity supply; drainage; and sewerage. Within a site, providing pitches of varying sizes will allow for accommodation of households of different sizes. The GLA encourages bids that take into account best-practice principles outlined by the National Housing Policy Advisory Panel on Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation, National Housing Federation and Chartered Institute of Housing on ['Places we're proud of'](#).

### **5.5 Housing management and support services**

SSH often includes a support service, which may be delivered directly by the organisation delivering the homes (the housing provider), by a partner commissioned by the housing provider or through the GLA's commissioned support services partners. A range of support models exist to meet different client needs and accommodation types, including floating and on-site service. While the AHP does not provide revenue funding for support, it is expected that appropriate support will be provided or procured by housing providers on projects that require it. Other programmes may have revenue

funding available.

Support arrangements must be based on a written agreement that sets out the responsibilities of each party and how they will work together in the interests of the clients. In addition, the agreement must address issues including performance standards review, safeguarding, GDPR, procedures to be followed in the event of breach of the agreement and have provisions for termination by either party.

## **5.6 Other Funding routes for specialist and supported housing**

In addition to the AHP, the Mayor funds SSH through other programmes. More programmes may be introduced from time to time and will be publicised on the [GLA's specialist and supported housing webpage](#). Current programmes include:

- The Rough Sleeping Accommodation Programme (RSAP), which provides capital and revenue funding for move-on housing and support for rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping. The aim of RSAP is to support rough sleepers towards independent living, with tenancies of 6 months to 3 years, during which time clients will be supported to move on to independent accommodation. New build, acquisition, remodelling and Housing First projects are funded through RSAP. Projects must complete by 31 March 2023.
- The Move On Programme, which provides capital funding for move on housing and support for rough sleepers and survivors of domestic abuse. Move-on accommodation is self-contained and pepper-potted, to support independence and help clients to integrate into the community around them, but can take the form of new build, acquisition, and remodelling projects. Move-on accommodation must be offered with a level of support attached, so that clients can receive help to sustain their tenancy and to move on to independent living (typically after around two years). Projects must start on site by 31 March 2023.
- The Care and Support Specialised Housing (CASSH) programme, which provides capital funding for housing for older Londoners and adults with physical or learning disabilities and autism, and adults with mental health issues, with well-designed, accessible homes, enabling them to have an appropriate level of care, so they can live independent and dignified lives. New build and remodelled projects are funded through CASSH. Funding is available for starts on site by March 2025.

- The Community Housing Fund, which provides revenue funding to community-led groups to help cover the costs of project-specific activities that will support development of proposals for new housing projects, pre-development costs and preparing for planning applications and/or capital funding (including grant and/or development finance) for the delivery of new homes. Projects must start on site by 31 March 2024.
- Homelessness Change, which provides capital funding for remodelling or building new hostels for rough sleepers, those at risk of sleeping rough, other non-statutory homeless people and victims of domestic abuse. Platform for Life is part of Homelessness Change and provides capital funding for affordable rent, short-term accommodation for young adults (18-24 years) in education, training, or employment, as a step towards independent living. Projects must start on site by 31 March 2023.
- To support delivery of the Mayor's new duties under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, [there is revenue funding available](#) to provide services and initiatives for victims and survivors of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation, including refuges. The Mayor's plans are set out in his Domestic Abuse Safe Accommodation Strategy.

In most cases the Affordable Housing Capital Funding Guide applies to these different bespoke SSH programmes and will be cross-referenced in the programmes' grant funding agreements. In the event of any discrepancies between this Guide and the relevant programme's grant funding agreement, the provisions of the grant funding agreement take precedence over what is set out here