

Response by One Housing Group

Assisting tenants with debt management in light of the cost of living crisis

We are committed to supporting our customers at this very difficult time. We have two specialist Welfare Benefit Advisers and two Affordable Warmth Officers available to offer advice and support for all residents who require this. The Welfare Benefit Advisers work with residents to assist with income maximisation, making sure that customers are claiming all the benefits they are entitled to. They work closely with other services such as Citizens Advice and Money Advice and where residents need additional support will signpost customers to other organisations. This year we have launched a new Helping Hand (crisis) fund. Residents can apply for a Helping Hand grant up to a maximum of £500 per household each year for help with a variety of items including travel fares and white goods. Our Affordable Warmth Officers support residents specifically with concerns with their energy bills and work with our Asset management teams to review any issues that may impact on a residents ability to heat their home. The Officers consider EPC levels to target those residents most likely to be affected.

Retrofitting our stock

One Housing and Riverside have made a joint submission to the BEIS under the SHDF bid process for over 1000 properties across our entire stock. This amounts to a total bid of £28m with £15m being provided by us and £13m of SHDF grant from the BEIS if successful.

125 properties within London are included in the joint bid. As soon as know more about the success of our bid application we will be able to confirm the plans for individual local authorities.

Investing in fire safety measures

We have a range of blocks in Camden including those over 5 storeys, where we undertake Fire Risk Assessments. We have engaged Savills to carry out these Fire Risk Assessments which are reviewed at appropriate intervals and findings recorded on a system called Riskhub. All our relevant internal teams and contractors use RiskHub to manage Fire Risk Actions including both management and remediation actions to ensure effective tracking and completion in an appropriate and timely manner. An intrusive survey programme is in progress for buildings with an External Wall System and a programme is in place to install or renew Premises Information Boxes in 2023 on all One Housing owned buildings above 18m in height as per the requirements set out in the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022.

As part of the new requirements of the Fire Safety (England) Regulations 2022, we have already engaged a Fire Door specialist to carry out appropriate Fire Door Surveys which will inform future remediation programmes. We are also in the process of upskilling existing staff members to be able to carry out more frequent Fire Door safety checks in addition to their existing compliance duties.

Addressing overcrowding

We currently have 355 residents living in Camden registered for a transfer. 32% of these are overcrowded. We have a detailed Allocations Policy with priority for overcrowding given under the terms in the 'bedroom standard' with children of the opposite sex becoming eligible for a separate bedroom when they reach 10 years. We may will also award priority for overcrowding when bedrooms are exceptionally small. All our available Homes, not passed to the local authority through the nominations process, are advertised through a choice based letting process with Home Connections.

While we award extra priority depending on the level of overcrowding we acknowledge the shortage of large family homes in the borough, and the long wait these families face. To help address this we have opened our transfer list for adult children living in an overcrowded home. As long as they are over 21 years and been part of the household for the previous 3 years and currently share a bedroom they can register in their own right and bid for a bedsit or one bedroom flat if these are available. This is also based on the priority of their application.

We are members of the national mutual exchange schemes and work with residents to register in addition to their transfer list application. We also signpost to other housing products such as shared ownership or the private rented sector where appropriate but recognise that from an affordability perspective this, for many, can restrict access.

Our specialist Allocations and Onboarding team are available to support residents.

Planned investment in 2022/23

We undertake 20% stock condition surveys each year to support our 5 Year Planned Investment Programme. We are budgeting for over a £1m in Camden for 2023/24 which will include windows, doors, kitchens, bathroom and cyclical decorations.

I hope this helps but please do let me know if you have any further questions.

Sandra Fawcett

Director of Customer Operations