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4 ways housing associations can support better supported housing and non-commissioned exempt accommodation

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Housing associations hold a critical public health role as providers of supported housing, including non-commissioned exempt accommodation (NCEA). Currently, supported housing is not a formal part of the health or social care system, and the low profile and uncertainty about its role has created threats to its funding. While more systemic changes are needed, in the interim, housing associations can work towards best practice in the sector. Recommendations below based on a rapid review of supported housing outcomes related to health, wellbeing and inequality and interviews with people in NCEA in Bradford.

Recommendations for action

- 1. Support resident autonomy and control:** having control and autonomy over one's life and housing underpins quality of life, health and wellbeing, and life progression. Residents' control and autonomy can be supported through embedding co-production consistently in the way housing is organised, run and governed. This includes:
 - Ensuring all staff understand what co-production means, why it matters, what is expected or required and what 'good' practice looks like
 - Creating spaces that give residents meaningful voice and influence over decisions and actions in the housing, including, for example, co-creating household rules
 - Ensuring residents have ownership over their own spaces wherever possible (*e.g. can have guests in their rooms, lock their door, can decorate their rooms as they see fit*)
- 2. Transparency with service charges:** transparency is a key element to trust building, crucial for supporting successful public health, wellbeing and equality outcomes. Options for improving transparency include:
 - Providing a detailed, itemised invoice of service charge costs, alerting residents of price or service changes
 - Where possible, working with residents to decide what services need to be offered as a minimum, as current services may not be adequate (*e.g. fully-functioning wifi to support housing bids*)
 - Create a non-punitive responsive system where residents can report if services are not being provided so Housing Associations As can rectify as needed (*e.g. if a cleaner for the common areas is no longer coming as scheduled*)
- 3. Provide the basics:** many new residents will be arriving from difficult circumstances, often without the basic necessities for living nor the funds to immediately purchase them (*e.g. pots and pans, toothbrush, pillow*). Options for support include:
 - Creating a loan programme of goods where, until community care grants or similar grants/funds for goods can be secured, residents can borrow from a 'library of basics' owned by the housing association
 - Creating an opt-in programme for beginning of tenancies where those without the basics can receive a basics pack from the Housing Association, paid back at 0% interest in their service charges for an agreed duration
 - Connecting residents to resources (*e.g. grant programmes, credit unions*) that can help facilitate for them to build a foundation for their future
- 4. Evaluate your approach from a public health perspective:** everyone has a different journey and needs in supported housing and non-commissioned exempt accommodation. Taking a complexity-informed approach that foregrounds residents' experiences can lead to better quality of life and wellbeing outcomes, and support defining what success looks like for groups and individuals. Options to support this may include:
 - Discussing with residents at regular intervals what their wellbeing needs are and how they would like support, as they likely will change during the course of their stay
 - Taking into account a range of evidence when evaluating if a housing association's approach is suitable for the individuals and groups supported, including outcomes of relevance to the health and social care system (*e.g. appropriate health care use, quality of life scoring or wellbeing metrics, soliciting meaningful feedback from residents*)

Read the full [How Could Local Authorities Improve Supported Housing? rapid review report](#)

See our [40-second animation highlighting the key finding from our qualitative research](#)

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