

# Identifying Diverse Needs of Customers Policy

**Version Number:** V1.0

**Effective From:** June 2025

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version.**

**Applicable To:** This policy applies to all areas of our organisation where services are delivered to tenants and customers, including instances where we operate as an energy provider with responsibilities for a Priority Services Register (PSR).

**Associated Documents:**

The following resources support the Identifying Diverse Needs Customer Policy policy. These can be found on the right of the Connect policy page:

- Vulnerable Heat Customer Policy Compliance Note
- Knowledge and Information Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy

**Equality, Diversity & Inclusion:** An ED&I Assessment was completed in January 2025. Please contact the Governance team if you require a copy.

**Approved By:** Customer Services Committee

**Policy Author:** Head of Service (Care & Support)

**Policy Owner:** Director of Housing

**Next Review:** June 2028

**Reference Number:** POL-0170

## 1. Policy Scope

As a registered social housing provider, Bernicia has a duty to make sure that our services are fair and accessible for all our customers. This policy outlines our commitment to delivering equitable and inclusive services and how we identify and support vulnerable individuals. Diverse needs include physical, mental, financial or situational factors that limit an individual's ability to engage with or benefit from Bernicia's services effectively.

The identifying diverse needs of customer policy is in line with all relevant regulation and legislation including but not limited to:

- The RSH Consumer Standards
- Ofgem Heat Networks Regulations
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2018
- Equalities Act 2010

## 2. Policy Standards

### Standard 1: Identifying Needs

We will proactively identify vulnerable individuals through engagement and regular contact and record details, where appropriate.

### Standard 2: Service Delivery

We will consider vulnerability in service delivery to ensure equitable access for all individuals.

### Standard 3: Risk Assessment and Mitigation

We will recognise and address risks of harm to vulnerable individuals

### Standard 4: Communication

We will provide communication in accessible formats where required, such as large print, translations or alternative methods

### Standard 5: External Agencies

We will work with external agencies to provide integrated support

### Standard 6: Continuous Improvement

We will regularly review policies and procedures to reflect our commitment to vulnerable customers and use feedback to inform improvements

### Standard 7: Heat Networks

We will provide tailored support in relation to heat and hot water supply for customers on Heat Networks, who are registered on our Priority Services Register and ensure proactive engagement and accessible communication during outages or billing difficulties

### Standard 8: Training and Awareness

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We will deliver regular training to staff on recognising and responding to diverse needs.

### 3. Definitions

Word/Phrase	Definition
Diverse Needs	An individual's personal circumstances limit their ability to engage with or benefit from our services effectively. This may include physical, mental, financial, or situational factors.
Heat network	Heat networks supply heat and hot water from a central source to customers. In this policy the term heat network refers to a communal heat network, where a central energy source supplies heat and hot water through a network of pipes to a number of homes within a single building..

### 4. Version Control

Version Number	Effective Date	Amendment made by	Version approved by	Description of changes
V1.0	June 2025	New Policy – Head of Care & Support	Customer Service Committee	New Policy

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