

Public Questions and Statements – Housing Policy Committee

Meeting Date: 19/09/2024

Questions (Committee Remit)

From: Jamie Hicks

Question:

1. **Training and Awareness:**

- What training do Sheffield City Council staff receive on handling tenants with mental health issues?
- Are there specific protocols for cases involving tenants with mental health conditions?

2. **Eviction Procedures:**

- What are the procedures for evicting tenants, especially those with diagnosed mental health conditions?
- How does the council ensure that evictions are conducted legally and ethically?

3. **Benefit Transition and Support:**

- What is the process for transitioning individuals from ESA old-style support group to Universal Credit, according to the Universal Credit Transitional Amendments Provision Regulation 2022?
- Why was I required to claim Universal Credit without receiving a transitional letter from the DWP?

4. **Housing Benefit Issues:**

- Why was I refused housing benefit despite being eligible and paying rent from an income of £130 per week?
- What steps can be taken to rectify this refusal and provide proper assistance?

5. **Communication and Support:**

- What are the standard response times for inquiries and complaints made to Sheffield City Council, particularly in urgent cases involving vulnerable individuals?
- How does the council ensure timely and effective communication?

6. **Mental Health and Social Care Coordination:**

- How does the council coordinate with mental health services and social care to support tenants with mental health issues?
- What steps are taken to ensure continuity of care and support during housing instability?

Response:

1. As part of the mandatory training for new starters, each officer will complete a Safeguarding Awareness training module, which covers issues including mental health.
2. The council has published a Rent Arrears Recovery Policy, which is available at [Sheffield City Council Rent Arrears Recovery Policy](#)
The rent arrears recovery policy addresses the needs of vulnerable tenants as follows:
“We will make every effort to identify vulnerable tenants and highlight how this may impact on their ability to manage their money and sustain a successful rent account. We will treat vulnerable tenants sensitively, and adapt our working practices where appropriate, to ensure they do not face any additional barriers when accessing our service. We will record vulnerable tenants on our systems, and use this information to ensure we tailor our service to their needs”
Any evictions of secure tenants follow required legal processes and are a final resort taken when all other options have been exhausted. The Council has to apply to the county court for a possession order and the court will only grant this if it considers it is reasonable to do so. The court must be fully satisfied that all due processes have been followed, and the tenant has had an opportunity to engage with the Council and avoid being evicted.
3. This process is the responsibility of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), not the Council, so they would need to be contacted to provide this information.
4. It would not be appropriate to comment on individual cases publicly through this Committee, although I understand written explanations have been given directly.
5. All complaints made to the Council should be acknowledged within 5 working days of receipt of the complaint. Stage 1 investigation responses should be completed within 10 working days of the acknowledgement letter and Stage 2 review complaints, within 20 working days of the acknowledgement letter. The full policy is available on the Council’s website [Complain about a council service | Sheffield City Council](#)
However, where possible, will seek early resolution of a complaint within 5 working days – though this often depends on the complexity of the complaint.
All customers, especially those with vulnerabilities, should feel supported by Council Officers when making a complaint. When making a complaint, customers may record any accessibility or additional support requirements. Staff receive training of how to deal compassionately with vulnerable customers, including the consideration of what factors may be contributing to a customer’s vulnerability.
6. Each tenant has a Neighbourhood Officer who is the point of contact for both tenants and other council officers and services. Housing Services have dedicated teams that are part of the social care structures including Team Around the Person (TAP) and Adults Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), routes for bringing professionals together to support tenants with their needs. The Sheffield Adults Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) is a local arrangement to fulfil the duties and commitments made in the South Yorkshire Safeguarding Procedures. This brings together officers from different agencies working together to protect vulnerable adults from potential harm.
Tenants are given the opportunity to discuss any mental health, care or support need as part of their annual visit from their Neighbourhood Officer. The Tenancy Enforcement and Sustainment Team within the housing service provide training to mental health staff to ensure that they understand the role of the housing service. This ensures that mental health staff have

the information and understanding they need to engage with the housing service when their service user's needs require this. Where appropriate Officers are empowered to refer into the support structures to mitigate any impact on tenants during housing instability.

Questions (Published Agenda) - none received as yet

From:

Question:

Response:

Statements (Published Agenda) - none received as yet

From:

Statement:

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