

APPENDIX 1

The variety of work with tenants to support their mental health and wellbeing is provided both to have a positive impact on their lives and to ensure that tenancies are sustained wherever possible. Tenancy risks can come through a variety of different routes. These can include rent arrears, anti-social behaviour and condition of property. The Council understands that poor mental health and lack of support can be a tenancy risk and therefore has a number of different approaches to try and manage the impact.

The Council also acknowledges that social isolation, despite improvements in technology, is still an issue for some tenants and can have a negative impact on mental and emotional wellbeing. This has particularly been identified as an issue when responding to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The Council has a number of stages at which it can identify those who require additional support. There are also a number of methods it uses to try and ensure a more positive outcome.

Work with applicants before they become tenants

All applicants who apply to the waiting list and are eligible for our assistance in accordance with policy and legislation are assessed and placed within a band. Part of the banding assessment is to look at health issues and how they impact on the applicant's current housing. This will affect the decisions made on what band the applicant is placed in and what type of accommodation applicants are housed in. As part of this assessment, the Council requests information from relevant support agencies or medical professionals to understand an applicant's needs.

When an applicant is made a provisional offer of accommodation a risk assessment is completed and shared with the tenancy management and independent living teams, showing relevant information and potential tenancy risks. This assessment plays an important role in forming the relationship that teams will have with a tenant. This approach allows the Council to be proactive in the support and services that are offered.

Mental health and wellbeing of tenants in General Housing

It is the role of the Housing Officer to liaise with support agencies when required, to ensure that tenants are able to access support services that may assist them with their day to day lives. The team have built many positive links with the various statutory bodies, health professionals and voluntary agencies to ensure that tenants receive the help that they need when they most need it.

If tenants require a higher level of support than can be provided by the Housing Officer, they will make a referral to the Tenancy Sustainment Officer. This officer works within the same team but provides more in depth case work to assist individuals who may not be getting the support of any statutory agency and their tenancy is potentially at risk.

When dealing with neighbour nuisance or anti-social behaviour Housing Officers will always consider the reasons. They are aware that the health of the tenant is often a triggering factor. In conjunction with considering any enforcement action, Housing Officers work with individuals to identify and seek to address any issues. Throughout any cases, Housing Officers have to balance the needs of an individual with the wider impact on the wellbeing of the rest of the community.

It is part of the Neighbourhood Strategy and the Engagement Strategy to engage more with tenants, particularly in the areas where they live and using more informal methods. Once it is again possible, the Council will be providing Housing Surgeries within its neighbourhoods, to ensure that officers and the Council's services are more accessible to all. This will ensure that people are given the opportunity to have their say on how services are run and to be able to speak to someone more easily.

Last summer United Living's Corporate Social Responsibility Fund provided funding for a group of tenants affected by mental health to attend an outward bound day at Lea Green Learning and Development Centre. The day aimed to help build relationships and confidence, develop communication skills and problem solving. The group were supported by training instructors throughout the day and completed problem solving/co-operative games; rope courses and archery. Feedback from the group was very positive. Unfortunately due to lockdown restrictions we will not be able to run another trip this year as planned.

In 2019 the Housing department also ran a pilot of a project to provide 45 free leisure cards to tenants who had been identified as potentially benefiting. This approach aimed to assist them with building positive habits into their lifestyles. To enable families to access leisure facilities over a sustained period of time, vouchers were sent out throughout the year. Throughout the year the Engagement team has worked with LLeisure to monitor the usage of the leisure cards and vouchers issued to review the success of the pilot.

Mental health and wellbeing of tenants in Independent Living

Part of the role of the Independent Living Coordinator is to create a bespoke I-Plan, detailing their support requirements and ensuring that all relevant information regarding the tenant in terms of health and social care needs are documented and understood. It is the role of the Independent Living Coordinator to then liaise with other agencies and professionals as appropriate. The I-Plans are reviewed regularly so it is understood if a tenant's health and wellbeing are improving or deteriorating.

The Independent Living Service also has two Activities Co-ordinators, who work to coordinate and deliver social activities for residents within Independent Living schemes. These provide an invaluable onsite service to ensure that tenants within Independent Living are included and to help combat loneliness and social isolation. These officers were newly appointed as part of the transition to Independent Living and have been an excellent addition to the service offer.

Additional support provided during the Coronavirus pandemic

As part of the response to the Coronavirus, the housing department used the data held with the housing management system to identify households who may require additional support. Over 600 calls were made to tenants living in general needs housing who were either over 70 or were known to require additional support. The purpose of these calls was to ensure that tenants were provided with advice and assistance. Independent Living Co-ordinators continued to have regular contact with tenants from Independent Living schemes via telephone.

Through these initial calls officers could identify those that required additional support, and could signpost to other agencies or ensure that the tenant received regular calls from the department.

All activities and schemes have stopped during the pandemic; however the Activities Co-ordinators have continued to support tenants. They have contacted tenants who usually attended their activities or those who were referred by other officers. They have given advice, support and company to them. A lot of the tenants they continued to work with live alone and have been self-isolating for a long time so are feeling the effects of the pandemic, emotionally and physically. The Activities Co-ordinators have shared information with them about at home exercises, online resources such as eBooks and at home activities ideas.