

Case Study

Property condition and safeguarding concerns

Kirklees Council Housing Services has dedicated teams working on different aspects of housing and support. This case study involved the Housing Access and Housing Compliance teams which both sit within the Housing Solutions Service.

Who was at the centre of the case?

- Person A & Person B lived together in a rural location.
- They were joint owners of an inherited property.
- Person A had learning difficulties.
- Both Persons were very wary of being exploited.

What was the situation?

- Housing Services became aware of the household via a Ward Councillor after a neighbour had raised concerns.
- The property was said to be in a poor condition.
- Persons A and B appeared to be isolated and refusing support.

What happened?

- Housing Services established that Persons A and B were the legal owners of the property.
- It was clear from the outset that a personalised approach was needed and formal correspondence from the Council may be too official and cause anxiety.
- A short informal letter let Persons A and B know that neighbours were concerned and asked if Housing Services could offer them any advice or assistance about their home or wellbeing.
- Persons A and B asked a friend to respond to the letter on their behalf, who explained their situation including that there had been an issue previously when they'd been charged excessively for building work and were very wary of further exploitation.
- The friend provided a contact number and a visit to the property was arranged. This was felt to be the best course of action in this case, given the potential safeguarding concerns in addition to the property condition.
- A property inspection was undertaken, and Housing Officers listened to what Persons A and B wanted. The friend was also present at their request.
- They were adamant they wished to remain in their home despite hazards being highlighted.
- A Hazard Awareness Notice was provided which listed the hazards identified. This enabled them to focus on the priority repairs.
- The Officers discussed and confirmed that they were in receipt of relevant benefits, were registered with a GP and in good health and had received their first COVID-19 vaccination.

- Officers also advised on energy efficiency, fire safety and how to arrange a visit from the Fire Service plus outlined a range of financial options for them to consider.
- Everything was followed up in writing including relevant contact information, should they need any further support.

The wishes and outcomes of Persons A and B were considered throughout the case. Officers established that their wellbeing was good and there was an advocate in place they trusted to support them. Officers were also satisfied that any concerns held by neighbours were justified but could be mitigated through the package of solutions and support options provided for them to consider, which they gratefully accepted.

What pathways, processes and procedures would be relevant to this case?

- **Everyone** working on adult safeguarding cases should refer to the [Joint Multi-Agency Safeguarding Adults Policy and Procedures](#).
- The individuals were involved in every aspect relating to their safety, housing and health. **[Making Safeguarding Personal](#) applies in all cases.**
- The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 places a duty on [specified public authorities to refer](#) individuals who they think may be (homeless or threatened with).
- If their situation and outcome hadn't been as positive, then Officers may have needed to consider the self-neglect policy which can be found on the [Kirklees Safeguarding Adults Board webpage](#).

Who is the Housing Access team?

- The Housing Access team are the first point of contact for customers accessing Housing Solutions Service.
- It is similar to an intensive triage whereby the team discuss the customers' circumstances and needs and look at the best course of positive action for their situation.
- This can include opening a homeless application; re-directing current tenants to the most appropriate housing officer/department or making a referral through to the Housing Compliance team.

Who is the Housing Compliance team?

- The Housing Compliance team predominantly work with properties, tenants and landlords within the private rented sector and are also part of the Housing Solutions Service.
- As with this case study, Officers within the team are also sometimes involved in other tenures of housing as they are the best placed to advise on disrepair and which risks and hazards would be listed under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS).

Housing enquiries and concerns can be directed to housing.solutions@kirklees.gov.uk and general information can be found on the [Council's Housing and Homelessness webpages](#).