

Safer & Stronger Communities Scrutiny & Policy Development Committee
Thursday 6th April 2017
Public Questions

Response to public questions raised at the meeting held on Thursday 6th April 2017.

Question 1

I am living in a very dirty overcrowded G4S house which has people forced to share bedrooms. When will asylum tenants be able to get single rooms in Sheffield?
Why does the Council allow G4S to provide very dirty, unhealthy houses in Sheffield for asylum seekers?

The new HMO licencing Standards, agreed on 23rd Feb and discussed by Scrutiny on 6th April, introduces a revision to the standards for asylum seeker properties that all single persons sharing bedrooms have to agree to share in writing. In addition, the floor space standards for these rooms have been increased to double size of a single bedroom. This means from May 2017, all new HMO properties come under this new policy and all new asylum seekers coming to Sheffield have the choice whether to share a bedroom or not. We are also working with G4S, the provider of asylum accommodation in Sheffield on an agreed 6 month transition period applying the same rules of no forced bedroom sharing to all existing G4S asylum seeker accommodation in the city.

Accommodation provided by G4S should meet certain standards, as stated in their national contract with the Home Office. The Council's Private Housing Standards Service is responsible for inspecting the licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO), which may be used to home Asylum Seekers, and we enforce those standards where required. Where any problems with these, or non-licensable properties, are brought to our attention, our approach is always to ensure that G4S have been notified and have had an opportunity to rectify the problem. If G4S fail to do so, then we will generally need to carry out an inspection and take any appropriate enforcement action.

Response provided by: Angela Greenwood, Locality Manager (Cohesion) & Stephanie Scott, Private Housing Standards

Question 2

On behalf of SYMAAG (South Yorkshire Migration and Asylum Action Group) could I welcome the decision of the Council to ban forced bedroom sharing in their licenses for HMO's, two years after the Council first declared to G4S its opposition to the practice, this means a major reform of asylum housing in Sheffield is about to happen.

Could I ask for reassurance on the timetable which has been agreed with G4S to ensure that all those asylum seekers presently in asylum housing who do not want to share their bedrooms will be guaranteed single rooms?

We also agree this is a major reform of asylum housing in Sheffield. We are working with G4S, the provider of asylum accommodation in Sheffield on an agreed 6 month transition period (which started 23rd Feb 2017) applying the same rules of no forced bedroom sharing to all existing G4S asylum seeker accommodation in the city. This means G4s have to move people out of shared bedrooms where they have stated they do not want to share by 23rd August 2017, with a 4 month review due on 23rd June 2017 to track progress on moving people out of shared bedrooms where they do not want to share.

Response provided by: Angela Greenwood, Locality Manager (Cohesion) & Stephanie Scott, Private Housing Standards

Response sent by post on Thursday 27 April 2017

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