

City of Westminster

Written Council Question

Standing Order 9(c)

The following sets out a question from Councillor Selina Short asked, in accordance with Standing Order 9 (c) of Councillor Liza Begum, Cabinet Member for Housing and her reply.

Councillor Selina Short

I have had a lot of casework recently relating to L&Q (both relating to ASB and building repairs) which our brilliant officers have been helping me with; I wondered how the council monitors standards in Housing Associations and if the cabinet member also has concerns.

Councillor Liza Begum

Housing Associations are independent of the City Council and are regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing and therefore the Council does not have a direct control over their activities. However, where there is evidence of breaches of Environmental Health standards at properties owned and managed by Housing Associations or in the private sector (and this can include serious disrepair) then the Council's Residential Environmental Health Team within Public Protection & Licensing can investigate.

Unless there is in an imminent risk to health, the Residential Team would initially require the tenant to progress their complaint through the Housing Association and if required, through their formal complaints' procedures. Where fault is found through this process or through the Housing Ombudsman it would be then that the Residential Team would investigate these matters and have statutory powers to act against these landlords.

Council officers work closely with Housing Association landlords where disrepair is reported to the Council by residents or members and these strong working relationships are resulting in appropriate positive action being taken by Housing Association partners when either disrepair or incidences of ASB are reported. In developing the Council's new ASB strategy we have consulted and engaged with our Housing Association landlord partners and the new strategy will lead to stronger joint working with these landlords in tackling ASB in our estates and across the city.

As part of the Future of Westminster, Housing Commission, we are also working with our Housing Association landlord partners to improve joint working between these landlords and the Council and to improve the housing experience of our residents.

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Councillor Selina Short

Please could I have an update on progress on The Housing Department and Adult Social services are making in working together on ASB cases in our social housing following my question in full council before Christmas - the Cabinet member agreed it was a good idea.

Councillor Liza Begum

The Council's Housing Service has now established with Adult Social Care a Housing Complex Case Panel (HCCP) which meets monthly. The Panel discusses complex cases related to people living in our Council homes.

Those attending the Panel include Westminster Adult Social Care, representatives from mental health services and representatives from our commissioned services, including the drugs and alcohol service and the floating support service.

The purpose of hosting the HCCP is as follows:

- To act as a referral, point for complex cases for Westminster Council housing tenants and leaseholders facing severe levels of disadvantage.
- To facilitate discussions between appropriate services where any one service has been unable to resolve issues alone.
- To encourage collaborative and cross-sector working by allowing representatives to problem solve together, refer to more appropriate services and share action plans.
- To improve information sharing between appropriate services.
- To explore pathways to additional support and bespoke interventions where a resident has complex multiple needs.
- To prevent the need for crisis interventions.
- To identify and monitor the barriers within and between services and systems to influence system change.
- To sustain tenancies, prevent homelessness and improve overall health and well-being.

The Panel has been in operation since June 2022 and over 40 cases have been discussed. We have found it a great asset to discuss high risk cases with our partners in this forum. Actions are set at each meeting, and outcomes have been very positive, including a number of cases where partners were able to provide a quick response and thereby avoid a potential escalation of issues. In several examples we have been able to have priority given to starting appropriate processes to secure Care Act and Mental Health Act assessments for vulnerable people. This has had a very positive impact on our ability to manage these complex cases.
