

BARNSELEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan

Report of the Executive
Director - Communities

PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING ENFORCEMENT POLICY

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval to formalise and implement an addendum referring to Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2017 - 2020

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 **To approve the implementation of the addendum referring to Houses in Multiple Occupation to the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy 2017 - 2020**

3. Introduction

- 3.1 CR446, Cab.19.4.2017/10 sought and gained approval to implement the Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy.
- 3.2 Subsequent to approval being granted, Safer Neighbourhood Services have become aware of issues, apparently caused by room sharing by unrelated adults, who are not members of the same household, within HMOs.
- 3.3 It is, therefore, considered necessary to include the addendum to the policy to ensure that HMO occupancy levels are monitored to establish that room sizes and amenity standards are adequate for the number of occupants, and that, crucially, no more than one person shall occupy any bedroom with another, unrelated, adult unless they are co-habiting partners.

4. Proposal and justification

- 4.1 The proposal is to insert an addendum to the existing and implemented policy to prohibit room sharing in HMOs, by unrelated adults. The addendum includes a provision to 'monitor HMO occupancy levels, ensuring that room sizes and amenity standards are adequate for the number of occupiers and that no more than one adult shall occupy any bedroom with another unrelated adult unless they are co-habiting partners.'
- 4.2 Room sharing by unrelated adults is harmful to health and well-being; both physical health, through the potential spread of viruses, and mental health, particularly amongst those who have suffered much trauma, and can exacerbate existing mental health conditions and increase tension in households.

4.3 The proposal is further justified by the significant number of issues being reported in shared properties throughout 2017, on average one each month, including serious assault and threatening behaviour. The cause of incidents is often a result of language barriers and clashes of faith and culture; these incidents increasingly require interventions by Council and Police Officers even when classed as 'low-level'.

4.4 Other local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region have implemented policies to prohibit room sharing by unrelated adults.

5. **Consideration of alternative approaches**

5.1 The only alternative approach would be to not prohibit room sharing by unrelated adults and maintain the current position. However, as outlined previously, the number of *known* incidents is escalating and we believe that many such incidents remain unreported.

6. **Implications for local people / service users**

6.1 If approval is given to implement this addendum, the prohibition of room sharing by unrelated adults would apply to all HMO households in the borough. However, this will not affect co-habiting partners nor those whom chose to romm share with an unrelated adult.

6.2 The prohibition of room sharing by unrelated adults will greatly reduce tensions in HMO properties and thereby reduce the number of incidents which occur as a result.

7. **Financial implications**

7.1 There are no additional financial implications arising from this report.

8. **Employee implications**

8.1 Inclusion of the addendum will provide a definitive position for those who work in housing enforcement and will reduce incidents where council employees are required to intervene.

9. **Communications implications**

9.1 The Private Sector Housing Enforcement Policy is posted on the Council's website and the addendum will be included, if approved; there is no requirement for specific communications to be issued. Agencies which currently utilise a room sharing policy for unrelated adults will be notified separately.

10. **Consultations**

- Communities DMT
- SMT
- Equality and Inclusion
- Finance
- Trade Unions

- Asylum Multi-agency Partnership

11. The Corporate Plan and the Council's Performance Management Framework

- 11.1 The implementation of the addendum will further support the delivery of strategic priorities:

People achieving their potential

- Children and adults are safe from harm
- Early targeted support for those that need it

Strong and resilient communities

- Protecting the borough for future generations

12. Promoting equality, diversity, and social inclusion

- 12.1 An initial CIA / HIA has been completed; it is anticipated that the impact of implementing the addendum to the policy will be positive on those groups who are currently effected, i.e. BME groups who are currently required to share rooms in HMOs with unrelated adults.

13. Tackling the Impact of Poverty

- 13.1 The policy adopts a risk-based approach to intervention to assist the most vulnerable individuals in our communities. The addition of the addendum to prohibit room sharing will provide further protection to those who face the greatest impact from poverty.

14. Tackling health inequalities

- 14.1 As noted on the initial Health Impact Assessment, it is anticipated that the prohibition of room sharing by unrelated adults will reduce tension in households and have a positive effect on potential mental health issues, together with a potential reduction in physical health issues such as the spread of viruses.

15. Reduction of crime and disorder

- 15.1 There have been an increasing number of incidents in properties where room sharing is applied, apparently caused by a lack of a common spoken language, clashes of cultures, faiths and personalities. It is anticipated that incidents of this nature will reduce when room sharing is prohibited.

16. Risk management issues

- 16.1 Failure to adopt and implement a clear policy around room sharing may expose the Council to criticism, particularly as room sharing prohibition policies have been approved and implemented by other local authorities in the Yorkshire and Humber region.

- 16.2 There is a further risk that, as more local authorities implement policies to prohibit room sharing in HMO properties, there may be a need for accommodation providers to seek to procure additional properties to fulfil any

contractual requirements they may hold. Currently, there is an agreement between the council and the asylum accommodation provider that they will not seek to procure additional properties; negotiations would be undertaken if the providers wished to procure additional properties.

17. Health, safety, and emergency resilience issues

17.1 There are no health, safety or emergency resilience issues arising from this Report.

18. Compatibility with the European Convention on Human Rights

18.1 All legislation cited in this report and how it will be discharged will be compliant with the European Convention on Human Rights.

19. Conservation of biodiversity

19.1 None associated with this report.

20. Glossary

HMO House(s) in multiple occupation

21. List of appendices

- Private Sector Housing Enforcement Strategy 2017 – 2020 (Addendum on pages 2 and 6/7, highlighted in yellow)
- Initial CIA/HIA (available from Equalities Team)

22. Background papers

- Cab.19.4.2017/10

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Financial Implications /  Consultation (To be signed by senior Financial Services officer where no financial implications)
