

May 2022

News

Technology Enabled Care in Housing

New Tec in Housing Lead Stephanie Elliot has been in post for a month and is getting up to speed with all things TECH.

The Technology Enabled Care in Housing (TECH) programme has been funded for a further 30 months (until August 2024). Its main focus going forward will be on the analogue to digital transition, and how housing providers can be supported and empowered to face the challenges and maximise the opportunities the switchover will bring.

As early as 2023, it will not be possible to buy an analogue phone line from BT. Instead, [BT will move its customers to a digital, Internet Protocol \(IP\) network, in readiness for the shut-down of all its traditional telephone lines.](#)

Stephanie's email is selliot@sfha.co.uk. Please get in touch to discuss TEC developments or blockers in your area – sharing our progress and barriers raises awareness within our community.

In the meantime, other TECH websites that may be of interest include [Technology Enabled Care \(TEC\) | TEC Scotland](#) and [Making the most of TEC in Housing \(techousing.co.uk\)](http://techousing.co.uk).

COVID-19 restrictions easing – what this means for housing support

Some social care services are no longer required to carry out routine staff testing where staff and service users are not considered 'close contacts'. Some organisations, including some sheltered housing services, have judged the risk too high for their tenants and have decided they should continue with routine testing. It is not currently clear if free LFD kits will continue to be supplied by the NSS NHS. The Unit is taking steps to clarify this.

Self-isolation rules for the general population have developed into guidance to 'stay at home'. Staff undertaking 'face to face' social care work have been asked to refrain from going to work for five days until they show negative tests on consecutive days or until the 10th day as set out [here](#).

The use of PPE, including face masks, continues in social care settings as confirmed by the last update to the adult social care guidance on 22nd April 2022 [here](#).

Sustainability funding to help to cover the additional costs associated with COVID-19 is set to continue to end June 2022. You can find guidance about this in a [letter](#) from the Scottish Government. This funding is available for housing support and supported housing services.

COVID-19 guidance does not always spell out the implications for housing support and supported housing services. If you are aware of particular areas that require further clarification you can get in touch with the [Unit](#).

Possible changes to the Housing Benefit system for Supported Housing

On 17th March, Eddie Hughes, Parliamentary Under Secretary for Rough Sleeping and Housing, issued a [statement](#) about Supported Housing which included an intention to make *'Changes to Housing Benefit regulations to seek to define care, support and supervision to improve quality and value for money across all specified supported housing provision.'*

Any such changes could affect supported people and landlords providing supported housing in Scotland. At the moment it is not clear what these changes will consist of, but it is likely to involve a tighter definition of the type / level of support associated with the accommodation for the accommodation to be classed as 'exempt accommodation'. Currently the rule of thumb is the provision of 'minimal support and supervision' which is open to interpretation. The concerns about the level of rents in some supported exempt accommodation in England could prompt new limits on Housing Benefit.

What is driving these changes?

The UK Government's Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) Committee is conducting an [inquiry](#) into exempt supported accommodation in England following a 61.5% increase in the number of households living in this type of accommodation between 2016 and May 2021. There are particular concerns about the quality of the

accommodation and support in the West Midlands, Blackpool and Bristol. Up until May 2021 the Regulator of Social Housing had issued non-compliant ratings to three of the seven largest exempt supported accommodation providers in Birmingham.

In April this year, the UK Government published [Supported housing pilots: independent evaluation](#), which sets out findings from a series of supported housing pilot projects in England and recommends, amongst other measures, changes to Housing Benefit regulation.

Exempt supported accommodation in Scotland

In Scotland we can be confident about the quality of supported housing given that it is regulated by the Care Inspectorate and so is required to meet Health and Social Care Standards. Regulated services are subject to inspection and the Care Inspectorate has powers to close services down. Governance arrangements as well as the fitness of key staff and directors are subject to scrutiny. In addition to this, the supported housing workforce is regulated through the Scottish Social Services Council. As far as we know, the UK government is not questioning the standard of supported housing in Scotland.

Next steps

The Unit recently delivered a training session on Housing Benefit and Supported Housing for providers which included reflections on possible changes to Housing Benefit regulation. You can obtain the recording of this session by contacting [Yvette Burgess](#).

We will be following this up with a roundtable event in conjunction with the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations on 18th May to consider possible implications for supported housing in Scotland. The Unit will provide a further briefing note in due course. In the meantime, please get in touch with the [Unit](#) if you would like to discuss how such change might impact on your services.

Scottish Government

Obtaining PPE through local hubs

The Scottish Government has entered into an agreement with various partner agencies to continue the local PPE hubs up until the end of September 2022. The

responsibilities of the partner agencies are set out in a memorandum of understanding. The criteria for obtaining PPE through the local hubs remains unchanged i.e., for situations where it has not been possible to source PPE of adequate quantity or quality from usual suppliers and/or the cost is too high (although there is no benchmark cost to compare against).

The Scottish Government is gathering information about the reasons social care providers, including those delivering housing support / supported housing services, turn to the PPE local hubs for assistance. This information will help inform decisions about the level and form of support that the sector will need beyond September.

In the meantime officials at the Scottish Government have posed various questions for organisations to respond to:

- What is the current need to access PPE through the local hubs? How do you see that need changing between now and September?
- What are the factors that will affect the use of the PPE hubs post-September (for example: guidance changes, state of the pandemic, rural areas?)
- What would be the impact if PPE support was to stop being delivered through the local hubs after September?
- If PPE support were to continue, what are the alternative mechanisms for delivering this support if not delivered through the PPE hubs?

If you would like to discuss or share your responses to these questions with the Unit please contact [Yvette Burgess](#) by 16th May.

Better Futures

Training, Training, Training!

We've had a really busy couple of months running Better Futures training sessions with providers. Five organisations asked us to provide training for around 100 staff, which was delivered over the course of 13 individual sessions in March, April and May. Participants learned about the fundamentals of using the system – logging on, adding service users into the database, setting up placements, creating support plans and undertaking reviews – and sessions also explored other features of Better Futures, such as the client search function, administrative tools and running reports.

eForum



Training courses are always available for providers, but training is just one of the ways we support the organisations and staff using Better Futures. To find out more about the system and how we work with the organisations using it please get in touch with [the Unit](#).

The Housing Support Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Coalition of Care and Support Providers Scotland (CCPS) and Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), funded by the Scottish Government.

CCPS is a limited company, registered in Scotland under the company number of SC279913. The company's registered office is at Norton Park, 57 Albion Road, Edinburgh EH7 5QY. CCPS is a registered Scottish charity: No. SC029199.