

Councillor Sarah Allen – Cabinet Member for Housing

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12th March 2025

Cllr Michael Bennett-Sylvester

Elected Member

Via email: Michael.sylvester@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Bennett-Sylvester

Question to Council – Wednesday 5th March 2025

Thank you for your question to Council on 5th March 2025. I have set out your question and my response below.

Can the cabinet member please give their opinion of benefits to tenants of private landlords from the existing selective licensing scheme?

You have asked for my opinion of the benefits of the existing selective licensing (SL) scheme for private rented tenants so I shall give it below.

For me, SL is an enforcement tool that can significantly help the living conditions of tenants and as such is a 'good thing'. The scheme offers protection to some of the most vulnerable members of our communities and it can offer reassurance that someone is looking out for them, again, a good thing.

It also provides an avenue by which to raise concerns about their housing when they are reluctant to go directly to their landlord. One more good thing.

In my opinion the biggest benefit is the route it provides to get hazards in their properties rectified. This alone can help their living conditions, it can improve their health and lessen the worry that substandard housing can bring. Again, good things but undermined by some unscrupulous landlords who don't respond to SL identified faults.

Those are my opinions but let me back those up with some tangible statistics.

The current selective licensing scheme has delivered substantial benefits to private sector tenants in all the declarations, identifying and removing hazards within their homes with over one thousand five hundred enforcement notices being served.

Under the 2020 to 2025 selective licensing declarations, 2,021 full proactive property inspections, under the Housing Act's Health and Safety Rating system, have been undertaken. 1,394 properties, which is around 69%, were found to have Category 1 or 2 hazards which adversely affected the occupying private tenants. 584 Category 1 hazards, the most serious and possibly life-threatening hazards, have been identified and removed from 281 individual properties. Overall, 7,445 hazards have been identified and removed from the 1,394 properties.

Examples of category 1 hazards would include issues such as serious fire hazards or electrical safety hazards, significant damp and mould, excess cold or heat or risks associated with carbon monoxide, to name but a few. Similarly, many of these issues, where they do not present the most serious harm outcome, which means death or significant physical injury, could be classed as category 2 hazards.

Due to the reluctance of private tenants to complain about their landlords for fear of rent increases or eviction, the majority of these hazards would not have been discovered or rectified if selective licensing had not been operating a proactive inspection programme. Each of the 2021 households have had the opportunity to speak to a council officer and obtain advice and assistance in a range of matters.

As an example, on a visit just a few weeks ago officers found a property that had a hole in the first-floor bathroom floor. The floorboards had rotted and also the joists supporting the floorboards due to a water leak. The room below was being used as a dining room where the ceiling had collapsed, and the hole was of sufficient size for the occupants to fall through. That would not have been discovered without selective licensing.

That removal of hazards alone has got to justify my opinion that selective licensing is a good thing.

I hope that my response is helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Sarah Allen', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Councillor Sarah Allen
Cabinet Member for Housing