

Sheltered housing

Plymouth City Council has clusters of self contained Sheltered Housing flats or bungalows all over the city, almost 450 tenants in total. The Council has 12 schemes in all and each scheme has a Sheltered Housing Officer. This insert explains what Sheltered Housing is and what a Sheltered Housing Officer does.

🏠 What is Sheltered Housing?

Plymouth City Council Sheltered Housing is provided for older people in the city who are physically or emotionally frail and who are in need of support to live independently. There is an assessment process and waiting list just as there is for general needs housing. Each Sheltered Housing tenant has an alarm system to summon help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This help can be delivered by the Sheltered Housing Officer or by 'Call 24'. 'Call 24' is an alarm centre and serves people in need of assistance outside the normal working hours of a Sheltered Housing Officer. The alarm centre is always available to speak to, and help, tenants who suddenly become unwell, have an accident or are faced with a problem. Even if a tenant is unable to speak, 'call 24' will know who is calling because each alarm has its own unique call number. If it is felt that the tenant needs general support, then 'Call 24' will contact 'key holders' or the on call officer who will attend. If it is an



emergency i.e. Fire or a health problem, then the Emergency Services will be called and the on call officer notified.

🏠 What is a Sheltered Housing Officer?

The needs of tenants have changed over recent years. Sheltered Housing was originally intended for older people who led fit and active lifestyles with Wardens traditionally employed as "Good Neighbours". Nowadays they have responsibilities for a much older and frailer population of sheltered housing tenants, and are specifically trained for this. The change is reflected in their job title of **Sheltered Housing Officers (SHO)**.

A SHO can give tenants support, advice and help so that they can live as independently as possible. As well as direct support, a SHO has many links with other care providers so tenants can access a wide range of services.

🏠 What does a Sheltered Housing Officer do?

- A SHO's working week is 37 hours Monday to Friday. While on duty the SHO will give emergency help to tenants. Tenants can pull an emergency cord or press a pendant to get their

SHO immediately but if they are not available Call 24 will respond.

- The SHO will discuss with new tenants a Service level Agreement and Support Plan. These documents set out how the tenant and SHO will support each other. The SHO will also visit the tenants in the scheme regularly.
- The SHO also has 'general duties' for example, recording all incidents and emergencies, reporting repairs in communal areas and on behalf of a tenant, carrying out monthly Health and Safety checks including the fire alarm systems, and all office admin duties.

SHOs are also required to attend training, supervision, meetings, and have other responsibilities as a council employee, usually away from the scheme. For example, all employees have minimum training and team meeting responsibilities.

🏠 What does a Sheltered Housing Officer not do?

- The SHO can do many things for tenants and for the schemes but there are some tasks and duties which a SHO cannot do. Sometimes this is because of legal restrictions.
- SHOs are not qualified nurses and **cannot** change dressings or administer medication. They **can** make arrangements with a tenants nurse or doctor if requested, and help access ongoing support.
- SHOs **cannot** do a tenants cooking or shopping. Tenants in sheltered housing are meant to be living as independently as possible. If a tenant is not able to look after themselves for a short while,

the SHO can help that tenant by identifying support. For example, a family member or home carer.



- SHOs **cannot** do tenants banking or handle a tenant's money. Again, if a tenant is not able to do it themselves for a short while, the SHO can help that tenant by identifying support.

🏠 Who pays for the Sheltered Housing Officer Service?

Along with the costs of all the communal facilities, the cost for the Sheltered Housing Officer service is charged to tenants as a **Service Charge**, identified separately from rent. Services to sheltered housing tenants are governed by the same rules as any other services, in other words, the council can only charge exactly what the service costs. If tenants are eligible to receive **Housing Benefit** this service charge is covered by Supporting People Programme payments not by the tenants. Tenants can also get a **Fairer Charging Assessment** by contacting their Sheltered Housing Officer, who will make the referral. This may entitle tenants to help towards paying their rent and service charges.

If you would like further information on Sheltered Housing please contact:

Sheltered Housing Service,
106 Whinbank Road, Crownhill, PL5 3AZ.
Telephone: 01752 306005