

## 57964 Housing Instability, Drug Deaths, and Safeguarding Obligations in Edinburgh

I'm writing to draw attention to the direct link between unsafe temporary accommodation, homelessness, and the continuing rise in drug-related deaths across Scotland.

I ask that you confirm:

What safeguarding reviews have been initiated in Edinburgh in response to recent drug-related deaths among people in temporary or supported accommodation.

The City of Edinburgh Council does not conduct safeguarding reviews as these are not part of Scottish legislation. The independently chaired Edinburgh Adult Protection Committee has a Learning Review sub-committee. In 2021 Scottish Government published the National Guidance for Child Protection Committees undertaking Learning Reviews. This was closely followed by a similar model from Adult Protection in 2022. Significant Occurrence Notifications (SON's) and Learning Review Notifications are submitted to the Quality Assurance Team when it is felt a review of an incident is required, or where learning may be available. Although there has been no coordinated effort to thematically review recent drug-related deaths in temporary accommodation; there have been two Learning Review Notifications within the past 24 months involving drug-related deaths in Temporary accommodation. One is currently under a full multi-agency Learning Review. The other is being reviewed as a multi-agency reflective discussion.

In addition to these, the circumstances surrounding drug-related deaths may be reviewed as part of learning processes for Temporary Accommodation providers and commissioners and as part of clinical reviews where the individual was in drugs treatment.

What steps are being taken to ensure compliance with statutory duties to identify, assess, and protect adults at risk of harm?

Adult Support and Protection (ASP) procedures for both Council and Partner agencies were updated in 2024 with improved processes and standards. Recent reinspection activity was positive around this, with significant improvements noted in November 2024.

Extract from ASP procedures: -

Anybody can raise an ASP referral. ASP referrals can be raised via Social Care Direct (SCD) or through allocated work.

**KEY PRACTICE POINT:** Any referral suggesting that an adult may be at risk of harm, including anonymous referrals, should be considered without assuming that harm has, or has not, occurred. All referrals warrant a carefully considered and measured response. (Codes of practice 2022)

- All ASP referrals will be screened by a Senior Social Worker to determine whether the threshold for ASP is met and allocated within 24 hours.
- The Council has a legal duty within the Adult Support and Protection (Scotland) Act 2007 to make inquiries where it knows or believes that an adult may be at risk of harm and to ascertain if required to intervene to support and protect them from harm.

There is on-going quality assurance and auditing taking place to ensure that procedures, processes, and statutory duties to conduct inquiries, where necessary, are being fulfilled.

The Edinburgh Adult Protection Committee (APC) has an improvement plan in place, alongside quarterly Quality Assurance, Learning and Development and Lived Experience Sub-committees, in an effort to improve responses to ASP concerns.

Recent APC events, 'Protecting through Partnerships' (Feb and Oct 2025) have focussed on the housing emergency, homelessness and temporary accommodation crisis. Crack cocaine and drug-related deaths, as well as cuckooing, exploitation, and human trafficking. Latterly, the Alcohol and Drug Partnership (ADP) has been providing briefings to staff carrying out ASP duties on substance misuse, drugs deaths and crack cocaine.

From a health perspective all drug-related deaths at The Access Place (TAP) undergo a Local Case Review (LCR). This document includes an investigation into risk, vulnerabilities and any lessons to be learnt. This document is then submitted to the Patient Safety and Experience Assurance Group (PSEAG) who review this and decide if a level 1 Significant Adverse Event Review (SEAR) should be commissioned.