



Equality Best Practice in the PRS - Case Study

Name or pseudonym:	Shaun*
Location:	Monmouthshire
Date (or from-to):	2017-2023

Shaun has Aspergers and struggles with written and verbal communication. He is sometimes unable to contact others for help and he often does not feel able to open his letters or emails. He lives alone and struggles to manage his finances, so he sometimes falls behind on paying his utilities or council tax. Shaun also struggles to manage his Universal Credit account and can become very panicked if he loses his password, for example. Shaun works part time, and his Universal Credit payments fluctuate. This can make it difficult for him to work out how much rent he needs to pay. Sometimes, he becomes confused and falls into rental arrears.

Shaun's landlord is an Estate Agent with a large portfolio of properties across the area. Monmouthshire Council have worked closely with this Letting Agent to help Shaun live independently and keep his tenancy. Over the years, this continued collaboration has allowed Shaun to develop independence and a sense of security by enabling him to stay in his home. On more than one occasion, it has even prevented Shaun from becoming homeless.

An effective partnership

If Shaun misses a rental payment, the Agent immediately contacts the council's Prevention Team, and a member will phone Shaun and make an appointment to visit. They then support Shaun to identify the problem and find a solution. For example, they helped Shaun to apply for the rent element of his Universal Credit to be paid directly to the Letting Agent through the Landlords Portal. They also worked with him on some general budgeting skills, such as working out how much top-up he needed to pay, or how to set up a Direct Debit. Sometimes, the team have needed to offer additional support by applying for grants to clear small rental arrears or supporting Shaun to apply for a Discretionary Housing Payment.

On other occasions, the Agent might contact the Prevention Team with a concern other than a missed rental payment. For example, Shaun was struggling to afford his heating bills due to the cost-of-living crisis, and the Agent was concerned that he was cold. They advised the Agent to support Shaun to open his post, as there were vouchers for heating from the government which would help. The Agent's staff were able to do this, and Shaun gained access to support with his heating bill.

Preventing homelessness

These examples show how the Estate Agent and the Council Housing Team work together to ensure Shaun remains in his home, where he feels safe and happy. Eviction has been prevented a number of times, and Shaun's peace of mind has been secured through addressing his worries about debts. If the Estate Agent had simply evicted Shaun, he thinks that he probably would have ended up on the streets.

"The Estate Agent has been marvellous, and I wish more were like them. They are community minded and have humanity." Prevention Team Officer.

**name has been changed*