

**Tenants Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**11<sup>th</sup> September 2014**

**Introductory Tenancies Review**

**The Tenants Forum is asked to agree the findings of the Tenants Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the Introductory Tenancies Review. Following agreement, an action plan of recommendation will be drawn up and submitted to the forum for information at a future meeting**

**For decision**

**1 Introduction**

The Tenants Overview and Scrutiny Panel (TOSP) decided to review the process of Introductory Tenancies, from accompanied viewing, the sign up process and the tenancy visits at two weeks, three months, six months and nine months. The Panel will also look at Introductory Tenancy reviews and extended tenancies.

- 1.1 The key factors that made this review necessary were that the panel noted that the performance information relating to introductory tenancies did not appear consistent with the performance information regarding 2 week and 3 and 6 month visits.

The panel would like to compare the number of properties let to Introductory Tenants with the number of visits made. It was also felt that after a tenancy review there is a lack of monitoring to find out what happens if the tenancy is extended, do they then lead to successful tenancies or are they evicted or abandoned at a later stage.

- 1.2 The TOSP requested information from Leona Mantle this included:

- New tenancy agreements – all kinds
- Review requests
- Check lists
- Notice of terminations
- Decision letters
- Leaflets and information to new tenants
- New Tenants Pack – Both
- List of possible staff to interview and shadow
- Current monitoring information

## 2 Interviews and Research

The provided information was reviewed by the TOSP and a list of people to be interviewed was produced.

The TOSP wrote to one third of introductory tenants asking if they would be prepared to participate in interviews. Eight tenants responded and the interviews were conducted in their homes .

The staff interviewed were :

Leona Mantle – Tenancy Services Manager  
Maria Keane – Housing Services Manager  
Anne Coulson – Neighbourhood Manager  
Sally-Anne Harrison – Housing Income Manager  
Sara Mitchell – Housing Officer  
John Harvey – Void Surveyor  
Gerry Whitmore – Tenancy Support Officer

2.1 The tenants were interviewed between 5<sup>th</sup> August 2013 and 15<sup>th</sup> August 2013.

The staff interviews took place during November 2013.

The Panel would like to thank all those interviewed for their candour when answering the questions asked.

The staff questions and answers are appended to this report, tenant questions and answers are available on request.

2.2 The key factors that were raised by the interviews and research were,

The key factors raised by tenants were,

- Lack of privacy at sign up.
- Too much information given at sign up.

The main issues raised by staff were,

- Lack of communication between staff and departments.
- Monitoring of visits.
- Monitoring outcomes after reviews.

2.3 The key factors identified by the TOSP mirrored those of the interviewed tenants and officers.

### 3 Findings and conclusions

Issues raised:

- a. Tenants would like the sign up to be conducted in a private office and not at the customer service desk.
- b. The tenants felt that there was too much information to take in at the sign up, this was also the opinion of the panel members that participated in the mock sign up.
- c. The staff felt that there was at times a lack of communication between departments, sometimes leading to problems not being flagged as early as they possibly could be.
- d. There is a lack of monitoring to find out what happens if a tenancy is extended, do the tenants go on to have successful tenancies or are they evicted at a later stage.
- e. There is a lack of monitoring of how many introductory tenancy visits are not kept and the reasons why they are not kept.
- f. Introductory Tenants are not given sufficient information about their tenant representative or tenant participation.
- g. Concerns were raised regarding lettable standards and the time taken for work to be completed, this was thought to be beyond the remit of this review but may be reviewed at a later date.

Recommendations

- a. Sign-ups to take place in a private area, preferably in a private office. Neighbourhood Managers to be more involved with the sign up.
- b. The Tenants Handbook and a copy of the tenancy agreement to be provided at final verification to allow tenants to digest the information in advance and formulate questions to ask at sign up if necessary. This information to also be available online.
- c. At the accompanied viewing, tenants to be given written confirmation that any works identified as needed to meet the lettable standard will be completed before the tenancy begins, including time frame.
- d. Meetings to be attended by relevant officers focused on introductory tenancies to ensure problems are identified as early as possible. To include Neighbourhood Managers, income officers and those working in tenancy support and Life Plan.
- e. Systems to be put in place to monitor what happens to tenants after a tenancy review. This information to be passed to the Panel biannually.
- f. Systems to be put in place to monitor introductory tenancy visits by Neighbourhood Managers.

- g. Neighbourhood Managers to offer flexibility in regard to tenancy visits.
- h. Information regarding tenant participation to be included in tenants handbook , outlining the opportunities to get involved.
- i. Two week introductory tenancy visit to be moved to four weeks at the discretion of the Neighbourhood Manager, dependent on the level of support the new tenant requires.

## Suggestions

- a. Pilot a scheme where a complementary welcome basket containing essential cleaning products or basic food/drink provisions be given to introductory tenants, possibly as a joint venture between KBC and the Tenants Forum.
- b. Appointment visit letter to be changed to stress the importance of the introductory tenancy visits.
- c. Information to be given to new tenants regarding availability of affordable furniture, appliances and carpets.
- d. Lettable standard video to be available online to be viewed by tenants.
- e. Increase number of staff working within tenancy support.
- f. Tenant representatives to offer additional assistance to tenants, working in conjunction with tenancy support. This suggestion requires further investigation by the Panel.

## 4. Further action

- i. We would like all agreed recommendations to be developed into an action plan with timescales and a review date agreed.
- ii. The TOSP have made a number of suggestions. In consultation with the Head of Housing, we would like to draw up a prioritised action plan.
- iii. To ensure the success of this project the TOSP will set a review date before this review is resolved.

- 5. The report authors Martyn Lund and Michael Springthorpe have consulted the whole panel on its content. The panel agreed that this is a true reflection of their findings of the Introductory Tenancy Review.