

Re-Action Report For Allocations & Lettings Focus Group 23/06/08

At this focus group meeting, we asked our customers to suggest ideas on how we can improve our service in regards to Allocations and Lettings. Our response to the issues raised and the action we plan to take follows.

You Said:	Our Reply:
Areas of strength	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Risk Assessment conducted prior to sign-up is good as tenancy support can be provided where needed. 	<p>We agree - this highlights any support needs the ingoing tenant may have, enabling us to provide agency support. It also is a method of keeping our visiting officers safe as we can identify concerns or dangers, which may affect our staff.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The lettings pack is comprehensive although a little daunting. 	<p>We are aware of the huge amount of information given out and find the pack the best way of achieving this at this time so the tenant can be as informed as possible.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Welcome Bucket is an excellent idea as it shows consideration for the new tenant. 	<p>We think this is a wonderful idea and this provides our ingoing tenant with the first impression we wish to create for them. It makes a statement that we value the customer and we really wish to welcome them to our property</p>
Areas for improvement	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lettings process: several attendees thought the lettings process was too rushed, e.g., one tenant was given very short notice to move into a property and as a result had to continue paying 4 weeks rent on the old property due to the notice period. Another person found the transfer process too quick because of health reasons. <p>Suggestions for improvement include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure everyone has a pre-tenancy interview. Clarification is needed in the viewing letter regarding accepting the tenancy 	<p>We do try and give tenants as much notification as possible. On standard voids where we receive a 4 week notice we can offer the property in plenty of time and get a pre viewing done as long as there are no H&S issues within the property, also we will carry out a pre tenancy interview to discuss rent options and carry out the risk assessment questionnaire. The difficulty comes when we have a property offered to someone and it gets refused when the property is ready to let. That then impacts on the next tenant, as they cannot pre view and have a pre tenancy interview. We ask the same questions and it the same procedure but it is carried out at the sign up stage and they are</p>

REACTION



<p>“subject to viewing”, i.e., that the tenancy may start on the viewing date. Important as some felt under pressure at the viewing to accept a property, as the housing officer is present with all the documents and keys ready.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One tenant who moved from Essex pointed out that prospective tenants in Essex had 2 viewing opportunities so had time to consider their decision. Could Gloucester City Homes do the same? 	<p>expected to make a decision and commence the tenancy there and then. We are looking into ways we can improve this and when choice based lettings come into force in Gloucester this should not be an issue for us any longer as the only people to be offered properties will be the people that have bid for that property. We are holding a project group in house in July to address the offer letter and what should be contained in it. This should then hopefully set out exactly what is expected and give prospective tenants an idea of the way in which properties are signed up for and offered out.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utilities: utilities should be checked immediately before moving in, e.g., is electric and gas turned on? Is there a key for the meters? It would also be useful to have a list of utility providers. 	<p>All Gas and Electric meters are safety checked whilst the property is void. We have the electric on when the property is ready to let and we turn on and check the gas within two hours of the new tenant moving in or when is convenient as agreed with that tenant. We provide the tenant with the number for Transco to see who the supplier is but we cannot be seen to be advising tenants whom to get their supply from.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lettings pack: the lettings pack is a little daunting because of the amount of information. Having this information on a DVD was suggested and all thought this was a good idea, especially for those with reading and writing difficulties. It was suggested the DVD should be sent with the offer letter to allow time to view it prior to the appointment. Most attendees thought new tenants should also be enforced to watch it and scheme managers should help residents view it in sheltered schemes. 	<p>We are currently reviewing the whole of our letting process. We had investigated the possibility of media students at Gloucester university creating a DVD for us in order to give this to customers for on site letting information. This is a work in progress and certainly the way in which we would like to proceed.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support: more support should be provided in the first month of the tenancy, which can be a stressful time, especially if support needs have been identified. 	<p>We aim to do this by referring for support to external agencies. We do not have a blanket policy as we have to tailor each service to each tenant by assessing their needs and taking all information given into consideration</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garden condition: one tenant complained their garden was not cleared after moving in because their neighbour’s 	<p>This has since been rectified. We aim to get the ESW to clear the properties once they have been let. A job is booked on whilst the</p>

REACTION



<p>dog had fouled the area. The tenant had to remove the faeces themselves, which they were not happy about.</p>	<p>property is void if the need has been identified by the inspecting surveyor. Once this has been done the tenant must then take responsibility for the maintenance of the garden. If it is a shared garden then a housing officer must be informed of any issues so they can take action against the tenant.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Outstanding repairs: several tenants said repairs were still outstanding when they moved in and this was distressing.	<p>These have now been dealt with and each tenant has the responsibility to inform the housing officer if repairs are not completed when they should be. We are always happy to assist when tenants are experiencing problems but we would need to be made aware of them.</p>

If you have any further questions or comments please do not hesitate to contact us:

Gloucester City Homes
Atlantic Suite
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UW

Customer Services Line: 0800 408 2000
Text: 0778 148 2656
Fax: 01452 396599
Email: customer.services@gloscityhomes.co.uk
Web site: www.gloscityhomes.co.uk