

MINUTES OF LANDLORDS FORUM MEETING

HELD ON 15th September 2009 (Lister room) 2pm – 4pm

Present: Hafsa Begum, Lisa Duxbury, Ben Ullendu, Adrian Howe, Ahmed Choudhury, Lisa Lindo, Haroon Siddiq, Russell Hawkes, James Bolt, Amraaj Sanhu, Abdul Khalik, David Brener, Jacob Endzweig, Gregory Phillip, M Ali, Khalid Chowdry, Mr&Mrs Hanson, Maria Barnes, Nihat-Hussein, Ahmet-Husseyin, Adnan-Ghauri, Saadia-Mahmood, M-Ashraf-Din, Amit-Sangar, Alfred,Shailesh Patel, Amarjit Chaggar, Charanjit Singh, F Adeniyi, Imran, Sara Watson, Lionel Vonde, Rose Giwa, Mrs Chawdhry, Mukith Uddin, R Turner, P Brown .

London
Borough of
Newham

(LBN): Speakers : Rajan Amin – Coversure Insurance, Fred Baxter-Housing Options Manager, Sharon Webb – Initiative Team Manager, John Braines, David Bingham-Senior Council Tax and Benefits Manager, Ian Dick-Housing Service Standards Strategic Manager, Paula Powell - Tenancy Sustainment Manager.

Chaired by: Fred Baxter – Housing Options Manager

Minutes by: Wab Chowdhury – Landlord & Initiatives Officer

Apologies: Modesta Anucha – Strategic Housing Needs Manager

Minutes will be posted on the Newham Website

<u>Introduction</u>	<u>ACTION</u>
The meeting started at 2.00pm and was chaired by Fred Baxter who introduced himself followed by other officers that were present.	All
<u>Matters arising from previous Meetings</u>	
None	

<u>Gas and Electrical Safety- landlords forms John Braines</u>	
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[A] John Braines reported on the procedure for checking competency for the new periodic inspection report

- 1) When report arrives read through ensure work done matches that contracted and expected to be carried out.
- 2) Check that the Inspector's name and registration number and verifying organisation details, and all statements on the report are clear and legible and that the certificate clearly identifies all areas covered and those not.
- 3) The report should not contain statements requiring specific remedial works, but list the failings. Reports with lists of specified remedial works must be rejected – it is an indication that the person is not practised at drafting up the reports.
- 4) Contact verifying organisation on internet or by phone and check that the inspector is registered and that at the time the certificate was signed the person's competency was such as to cover the work.
- 5) If the report does not list any items needing attention to make it safe then if the inspector is found to be competent the report should be accepted and a copy sent to the tenant.
- 6) If the report lists items that require attention then a decision needs to be taken as to what remedial action will be taken. Where a risk to safety is identified this must be removed without delay, possibly by isolation of the circuits. These decisions may need to be taken in conjunction with the tenant/occupier.
- 7) A copy of the report must be sent to the tenant, I recommend that, where items are recommended for action within the report that it is accompanied by a letter explaining what action is being taken to remediate the situation.
- 8) When the remedial works are done they will need to be self certified as in the small works procedure. This certificate linked with the report should indicate that the installation is safe.
- 9) A legible copy of the report and the checking form is to be filed away or scanned into the digital filing system.
- 10) If suggestions are made that the inspection was carried out other than by the person signing the certificate then an immediate investigation must be mounted to determine the truth. The report must not be accepted until the matter is resolved.

[B] John Braines also reported on the procedure for checking competency for new electrical installation / Minor work

- 1) When certificate arrives read through ensure work done matches that

<p>contracted and expected to be carried out.</p> <p>2) Check that the installers name and registration number and verifying organisation details are clear and legible and that the certificate clearly states all work covered.</p> <p>3) Contact verifying organisation on internet or by phone and check that Person is registered and that at the time the certificate was signed the person's competency was such as to cover the work.</p> <p>4) If all is satisfactory then all aspects should be accepted.</p> <p>5) If any one of the items is not acceptable – that the form or part of it is not legible or that the installer is not approved as competent by the organisation claimed for the work done then the certificate must be rejected and the work treated as unacceptable.</p> <p>6) If suggestions are made that the electrical installation was installed other than under the direct control of the person signing the certificate then an immediate investigation should be mounted to determine the truth. The work should not be accepted or paid until the matter is resolved. Installers are allowed to have others help them e.g. a mate so long as the work is carried out under their control.</p>	
<p><u>Housing Benefits Updates by David Bingham – Senior Council Tax and Benefits Manager</u></p> <p>David provided the landlords with an update on some changes that were coming to effect from October 2009.</p> <p>Backdating- From 6th October 2008 the period of backdating will be reduced from 52 weeks to 3 months. Therefore maximum backdating will be limited to 13 weeks and under no circumstances will the claim be allowed to be backdated for more than 13 weeks.</p> <p>David reminded landlords of the LHA rates which are being used to determine rent levels.</p> <p>Rent payment schedules are not sent out to tenants at present and there are no plans to give rent schedules to landlords for clients claiming LHA. Tenants are paid every two weeks. If tenants on the bond scheme fall into 4 weeks rent arrears, landlord must then contact the Landlord & Initiatives team who will liaise with housing benefits. If tenants are receiving benefits and not passing it on to landlord/agent then Prevention team will get tenants into the housing options centre to investigate non payment of rent. If tenants fall into more than 8 weeks rent arrears, then landlord can request housing benefits to be paid directly to them.</p> <p>David also reported on problems with the benefits telephone system –</p>	

Housing Benefit are moving over to new call handling software which will mean that they no longer will have a dedicated landlord line. David and his team are trying to resolve this and get a dedicated line back and he said he would update on this at the next meeting.

David also talked about changes in the rules taking place in October - Child Benefit is to be disregarded as Income for benefit purposes from October which means that many claimants would receive more Housing Benefit.

Landlord Insurance – Rajan Amin (cert CII) - Coversure Insurance Services

Rajan Amin Introduced herself and gave a presentation on Cert CII Claims, He gave details of landlords cover, which can provide cover for DSS Council tenants, Asylum Seekers, Students and Professional Working People. Cover includes Accidental damage cover, Legal Expenses Cover, Home Emergency Cover and Rent Guarantee Cover.

Full information packs were available and if any further information is required, please call Rajan Amin (cert CII) on 0800 093 9009 (freephone) or email rajanam@coversure.co.uk.

Please note that there is no agreement between London Borough of Newham and Coversure Insurance Services

Bond Scheme update – Sharon Webb Initiative Team Manager

Sharon Webb updated that all bond scheme properties in the Newham borough will be inspected for property condition quality checks and planning permission checks.

Sharon also reported on the process for Bond Scheme claim –

Loss of rent:

that When a client moves out of a property without giving Landlords one months notice, the Council will look into the reason why.

Abandoned Property:

If the client abandoned the property and the Landlord notifies the council as soon as possible, The Council will try and refer another client to prevent rental loss to Landlord.

The Landlord can claim on the Bond certificate any loss of rent up to four weeks only.

If a client has been offered permanent accommodation via bidding and only giving two days notice to landlord:

Landlord should advise client to put in writing to the Housing Benefit department, of the Borough the property is in, that they had no option but move into their permanent accommodation, they must request for the four weeks notice period to be paid to the Landlord, a copy of the letter must be given to the Landlord & the Initiative Team at HOC, 3 Prugel Street, Plaistow, E13 9HB.

The Housing Benefit department will pay up to 4 weeks loss of rent while the property is empty.

The Landlord must notify the Initiative Team immediately that the client has moved out.

If the tenant moves out before her tenancy expires the Council will try and refer a tenant to stop any loss of rent to the Landlord, in this instance another Bond certificate will be given but no Incentives will be paid.

If the client has been in the property for more than one year and moves out via permanent accommodation, another incentive will be paid if the property is let out again on the Bond scheme.

Tenancy Sustainment Update – Paula Powell Tenancy Sustainment Manager

Questions raised by landlords on timely response times on letters sent to HOC, rent arrears , property abandonment, notice issues, communications issues with Housing benefits departments in and out the borough.

Paula stated that there will be a new Tenancy Sustainment team starting up very soon to handle all these types of queries and situations. The referral process will be accessible to the Prevention Advice Team, Landlords, Internal departments where individuals are residing in the Bond Scheme or Temporary accommodation.

Paula reported the Tenancy Sustainment Team's aim is to continue good working relationships with the landlord and educate and empower clients to live independently to maintain their tenancy and to go on to live without support. Paula will endeavour to update landlord at all times and provide an accessible service to client and landlord with a view to reduce the reoccurrence of homelessness.

Contact Details: **Paula Powell 0208 430-2000 Ext 41562 / email paula.powell@newham.gov.uk**

Landlords have requested a separate meeting with them specifically concerning Tenancy Sustainment - This meeting is to be arranged at a later date and landlords/Agents will be informed and invited accordingly

Fred Baxter thanked forum guest/speakers & members for attending and reminded landlords that the next forum meeting will take place around

January 2010, 2-4pm Lister Room East Ham and the agenda will be sent nearer to the time. Meeting closed at 16.00

Any other Items for discussion at the next forum

None

Futher information

In response to the Olympic & regeneration activity in the borough we are doing a survey in 2009 of all hotels, hostels and B & B accommodation with the fire brigade and other agencies to ensure safety and standards are being maintained.

Further information from Neil Coles - HMO Team Manager 0208 4303798.

Know an empty property, land or building please ring our Empty Property Hot Line on 0208 4304436 and let us have details.