

Annual Tenancy Visits –Questions/Areas for Clarification

Why visits are undertaken?

Is the Board satisfied that there is sufficient reason to do the visits?

What would happen if visits were not undertaken, who would suffer? (Landlord or Tenant or both)

Should we fail to carry out ATV's this could result in delays in identifying tenancy fraud and or vulnerable tenants and safeguarding issues. The impact would be felt by tenants as well as the Landlord

Who gets the most out of ATVs, Landlord/Tenant/both?

- **ATV's build on the Landlords reputation as one who cares about their tenants and that they are effectively managing their homes, tenancies & taking action on tenancy fraud.**
- **It ensures all tenants receive minimum annual contact from their Landlord.**
- **The ATV enables Housing Management to deliver proactive services to the tenant and enable early intervention to provide help and support where required**

Do we know how many service requests are made by tenants via the ATV? (I.e. if not many would the tenant miss them if they were stopped?)

- **ATV's ensure at least one home visit is carried annually, ensuring tenants get the opportunity to discuss any housing related issues with their Housing Officer, however given the reduction in patch sizes due to the pending restructure the expectation is that the service will be much more people centred and enable home visits to be undertaken at the tenants request.**
- **ATV's often give tenants who are more vulnerable the opportunity to request service and advise of any problems they are having, without contact they may not be reported to the Service.**

Do we know how many tenancy fraud/sub-letting cases are found via the ATV (i.e. if not many would Housing miss them if stopped)

- **Approximately 10 cases have been identified city wide through ATV's, the majority of Tenancy fraud cases are picked up by Housing officers through their day to day work.**
- **ATV's can be seen as a tool to prevent future subletting as they are well established in Leeds and therefore tenants are aware of these annual checks which may prevent sub-letting taking place in the first place and could be seen as proactive preventative work.**

Has any thought been given to just visiting new tenants?

- **It is good practice to contact all tenants annually as discussed above, however given the resource implications of ensuring 100% another option would be to risk assess visits with some customers such as new tenants requiring annual visits and those known to Housing Leeds with regular contact bi - yearly**

Has the Board sufficient information about how the visits are undertaken, by whom and what happens?

- **Report attached demonstrating outcomes – but further work is required to ensure best use of the information and identification of trends.**

The report states that the tenancy visits are unannounced, but according to the tenancy agreement (page 30, para. 2.7) reasonable written notice (usually 24 hours) is provided. Why the contradiction?

- **LCC's tenancy agreement affords tenants reasonable notice for the purpose of carrying out repairs however immediate access can be gained in emergency situations. The reason officers try to carry out unannounced ATV's is to better identify Tenancy Fraud. Should the tenant be committing Tenancy Fraud and officers give tenant's prior notice of an ATV this could allow the tenant to hide any instances of fraud, arranging for the correct tenant to be in situ with relevant paper work etc.**

Does the Department have a targeted list for ATV's where they have not had any contact with a tenant/property at all recently?

- **ATV's not carried out during the previous year ie over 12 months old are prioritised and lists are available.**

What issues are discussed on visits, e.g. repair requests, rent arrears etc.?

- **The primary role of ATV's was to identify Tenancy Fraud however a host of other issues are picked up on these visits such as, overcrowding, under occupation, employment, next of kin, internal and external property conditions, health and wellbeing, disrepair, outstanding repairs, digital inclusion and any rent arrears.**

Do different officers undertake ATVs depending on the tenure type?

- **The vast majority of ATV's are carried out by Housing Officers responsible for the tenancies within the area, exceptions to this include different Housing Officers working on the patch (combined efforts by the Area Office), Sheltered properties have ATV's carried out by the Scheme Managers on site.**

Given the declared purpose of the ATVs does Housing feel that the questions asked provide the desired information?

- **Yes but this is subject to continual review and Housing Management welcome the Tenant's Scrutiny Board's input.**

Are the right questions being asked during the visits? Is it an opportunity to ask other questions, e.g. whether there is a carer in the household, mobility issues, language needs etc., which might help other agencies?

- **A whole host of questions / issues can be raised on ATV's and usually Housing Officers are confident / trained to pick these up however these could be formalised and included in the process although this would increase officer time spent at each property.**

How is the collected information stored?

- **The information is recorded within our IT systems and databases.**

Are there other visits taken by other LCC agencies that could undertake ATVs?

- **Housing Repairs contractors do verification checks and highlight safeguarding issues – but this is not an in-depth review of the tenancy. ATV's can and will be linked to other Housing Officer visits where appropriate to make best use of resources; but ATV's are an essential part of the landlord tenant relationship and helps to ensure people know who their Housing Officer is .**

Has any evaluation been made of the data collected in previous ATV and if so what does it tell us?

- **See attached report based on last year's data – further work is required.**

What use is made of customer profiling data (see page 14, para. 3.4) and is the data shared across council departments?

- **The data is recorded on IT systems and shared appropriately, it can be used to map allocations and terminations for example to ensure all strands have fair access to our services and are not being disadvantaged. Differences in data would lead to more investigative work.**

Is the information gathered used for safeguarding purposes and if so how are such referrals made?

- **Housing Officers identifying safeguarding issues will work with Housing Support Officers to provide for further support and assistance to the tenants, where appropriate**

referrals will be made to Children's Services / or Adult Social Care. Assistance will also be given relating to tenancy and financial issues identified during the visit.

Do Housing officers have an ATV target to meet?

- **Housing Officers are tasked to complete 100% ATV's on their patch throughout the financial year, this is broken down into quarterly targets and managed accordingly.**

Do we know an indicative cost of a tenancy visit?

- **£15 for an hour visit**
- **£7 for a 30 minute visit**

Is the Department happy with performance levels, if not what is being done differently in order to achieve 100% target for completion of annual tenancy visits? (2013/14 figure was 73%)

- Performance levels appear to be increasing across Housing Leeds and it is envisaged that the new structure with lower Housing Officer patch sizes will have a positive impact on performance throughout the remainder of the year.

Why doesn't the performance data include a percentage data breakdown by ward as this would help with understanding the scale of tenancy visits undertaken across the city?

- **This could be an area for development**

Why does the performance data only show ATV's completed or ATVs no access? What about ATV's that weren't undertaken at all?

- **Housing Officers receive lists regularly of tenancies where no ATV has been attempted / completed**

What about the 27% of visits not undertaken in 2013/14? Are these visits being undertaken first in 2014/15?

- **Housing Officers are asked to prioritise ATV's on tenancies which have not had a successful visit in the last 2 years.**

Do different tenure types produce different performance figures in terms of successful completion of ATVs?

- **Sheltered properties usually result in the highest completion rates for ATV's given the ease in which we can contact our tenants, secondly families and finally those who work full time can cause problems in obtaining a successful visit.**

How many housing officers that undertake ATVs have been trained in Lone working?

- **All visiting staff receive training in lone working**

Is there any other training given to those undertaking ATV?

- **Yes – safeguarding, allocations, financial inclusion, tenancy fraud for example.**

Does the Council have a staff warning register, e.g. properties that should be visited by more than one person? If so, how is this information managed? Is it shared between Council departments?

- **Warning systems are in place as UDC's on Orchard that warn staff of any issues which are checked prior to carrying out home visits – these are currently being reviewed to ensure accuracy and relevance.**