

Note to Tenant Scrutiny Board on Questions Raised as Part of Scrutiny Inquiry into Annual Tenancy Visits – 02/12/14

Context

Annual Tenancy Visits (ATVs) have been undertaken in Leeds since 2008, although each of the former ALMOs took a different approach in carrying out the visits. In 2013 the approach to ATVs was reviewed and a citywide form and process developed.

Currently, there are 2 main aims to the ATVs:

- Tenancy Verification – that the tenant is living at the property.
- Tenancy Management and Support – identifying if there are any tenancy management issues which require action, or any additional support needs.

Housing Leeds has been collating the outcomes of the 2014/15 ATVs, and once the 2014/15 ATVs have been completed a review will be undertaken of the outcomes to identify the key themes. This, alongside the outcomes of the Tenant Scrutiny Board Enquiry will be used to refine the ATV approach for 2015/16.

Question 1

Is Leeds Housing the only Council that undertakes ATV visits and is there any relevant data nationally about this?

Many social housing providers undertake ATVs. We began benchmarking with other social housing providers in 2008, and the most recent benchmarking undertaken found that organisations continue to undertake some form of ATV, although with some different approaches:

- Frequency of visit - varies from 1 to 5 years.
- Some Landlords confirm an appointment with the tenant prior to visit and others undertake unannounced visits.
- Some landlords no longer use the visit to carry out tenancy verification.

Question 2

How many homes are in the Leeds housing area and number of tenants they hold?

There are currently 54,817 homes managed by Housing Leeds – 50,629 being general needs housing and 4,188 classed as Sheltered Housing.

54,313 homes are currently tenanted. Using returns from the STAR survey carried out in 2012 the breakdown of household sizes is outlined below:

Number of Occupants	%	Count
1 Occ	46%	23395
2 Occ	26%	13018
3 Occ	15%	7350
4 Occ	7%	3770
5+ Occ	6%	3096
	100%	50629

Question 3

What is the proper cost of an ATV visit?

We had previously indicated that the average cost of an ATV was £7.50 for a half hour visit, or £15 for an hour visit, based on the salary plus oncosts of a housing officer. In light of this question we have reviewed this and calculated an average cost of a visit to be £20.65 based on the following components:

- **Housing Officer scale C3** - preparation time - including; rent check, gas status, alert check, language needs, and vulnerability status.
- Travelling time
- Time inspecting property and garden, discussing individual issues and identification of support needs
- Follow up work such as tenancy support referral, tenancy breach and repair ordering
- **Housing Assistant scale B3** – inputting data, including - Orchard, Siebel, Outcome spreadsheet and Caseworks where appropriate.

This calculation is based on an average time of 65 minutes work for the Housing Officer and 20 minutes inputting for a Housing Assistant.

Question 4

How much has doing these ATVs saved Leeds housing?

It's not easy to put a quantifiable figure on financial savings to the service from doing ATVs as the savings will be indirect, but there are a number of positive benefits which we have seen, as follows:

- We have been able to identify tenancy management issues which were previously unknown and take action to address them.
- We have identified tenants who need additional support to sustain their tenancy, and been able to refer tenants for additional support.
- We have identified outstanding repairs and maintenance in properties and been able to order repairs.
- We have identified safeguarding issues and taken follow up action.
- The information that we collect will help us to identify trends, which we can then use to change the way that we deliver services.

Question 5

Do Leeds housing know of another council using mobile devices (PDA) i.e. to carry out ATVs?

We are currently looking at mobile working for housing staff and as part of the scope of the project will look at options for the use of PDAs to carry out ATVs. Through benchmarking we have identified one housing provider that uses mobile devices to undertake annual tenancy visits - Wakefield District Housing.

Question 6

The star survey has now been sent out why to all BITMO approx 1800 but to only a 5th of housing Leeds and to selective tenants?

When dealing with larger numbers (such as for Housing Leeds), a smaller proportion of responses are needed to accurately represent the views of the total population – so we can send to less tenants and still be confident our results are representative.

Because the BITMO total population is much smaller, i.e. 1800, a larger proportion of responses are needed to accurately reflect views, and so a decision was taken to send the survey to all tenants.

Question 7

Can you tell us how the tenants who will be receiving the survey were chosen?

Housing Leeds tenants were selected at random, although stratified to ensure the sample is representative by Ward, household size (using property type/beds as a proxy) and ethnicity. This means that, although selected at random, we select enough tenants from these groups, in these areas, to ensure sure we're sending it out to a good spread of people.

For example: if we know that 0.4% of all tenants currently live in Alwoodley, in 1 or 2 bed houses, and are BME – then we select at random enough tenants who live in Alwoodley, in 1 or 2 bed houses, and are BME to make up 0.4% of the mailing list.

Question 8

When will the tenant inspectors program be up and running as we need their help in gathering information for scrutiny projects as well as going out doing environmental estate grading's and providing service improvement suggestions?

We are currently reviewing our Tenant Offer, looking at ways in which customers want to engage and become involved with Housing Leeds with a view to developing a consistent approach across the city. There remain a number of groups which have continued in some areas of the city, covering a number of service areas, such as responsive repairs, empty properties, tenant inspectors. As part of the work to review the Tenant Offer we are reviewing the Tenant Inspection process to ensure a consistent city wide approach.

Research and development is ongoing with the Tenant Inspection process, and once complete the new process will include the following items:

- A methodology
- Risk Assessments
- Training needs
- Pictorial guidance

We have recently produced a generic application form customers to register an expression of interest on a range of ways in which they can become involved, including Housing Advisory Panels.

Question 9

Are there any areas of Leeds where the ATV visit are more successful than others i.e. completing more visits, does any kind of pattern emerge depending on the district?

We currently record the number of visits completed for each of the 3 housing areas, and by housing office and ward. There are some differences in the number of visits completed across the city, but these are mostly due to vacancies within the area housing management offices as a result of the recent staffing structure.

We are collating the outcomes of the 2014/15 ATVs, and once the 2014/15 ATVs have been completed we will undertake analysis to identify trends, and whether these are citywide issues, or particular to a specific geographical area / household type etc. This will then help us to develop the service, whether it is citywide policies and procedures, or projects targeted at particular areas of the city or for particular household types.