



CS1 THSS Local Authority Delivery Partner Concept

Helping Improve The PRS – The Home Safe Delivery Partner Concept

Introduction

Home Safe's purpose is to 'help improve the Private Rented Sector in a sustainable way through the quality of housing and standard of tenancy management.' Our staff demonstrate a commitment to this purpose every day in the work we do with our Local Authority partners and our member landlords.

We do so because of a deep and passionate recognition that the homes in which we live have a powerful influence on our state of mind, our health and our wellbeing. We want to see more homes within the PRS, that are safe, secure, warm and that are ultimately healthier for individuals, for society and for local communities as a whole.

This case study explains the concept behind Home Safe and how it works. There are other case studies looking at other elements of our work such as the application process, inspections, monitoring remedial works, enforcement and previous schemes.

Each new scheme has benefitted from the lessons learned from previous schemes, which is probably not surprising, but we have learned those lessons and so, consequently, have been able to refine our subsequent schemes.

We are, therefore, now in a position to be able to offer a very streamlined, efficient, tried and tested service to assist Local Authorities in delivering cost effective and successful Landlord licensing schemes which improve landlord behaviour and property conditions to a level it

What really drives and excites me and my team is that this approach will deliver:

- Cost neutral schemes for Local Authorities, negating the need for additional funds from the public purse.
- Improved PRS housing conditions without the need for Council involvement (in the vast majority of cases).
- A better understanding of PRS housing stock condition and the Landlord community.
- Employment opportunities for local people, especially ex forces, fire & police.
- Opportunities to drive funding for energy initiatives.
- Increased revenue into local B&Q stores and other local builders' merchants.
- Increased work for local contractors repairing identified issues.
- The opportunity to develop community initiatives to drive positive change into the area.



Carl Agar
Chief Executive

Objective

To make Landlord licensing schemes more efficient and effective for Local Authorities.

Given that selective and additional licensing is introduced to change landlord behaviour, we believe that behaviour will not change unless appropriate enforcement is used (otherwise why licence?), but crucially, against the most deserving. The vast majority of the PRS supports this approach as long as it is against the most deserving. However, Local Authorities have traditionally found this a challenge due to a combination of having to follow onerous administrative processes, having limited resources and not being able to easily identify those most deserving of their attention.

The Home Safe approach, with professional knowledge and experience of both the private rented sector and Local Authority sector, provides support for Local Authorities. As their Delivery Partner, it allows them to identify and concentrate on the worthiest offenders. It means any enforcement action is more easily achieved, transparent, fair (aimed at those most deserving), conclusive (less open to challenge) and therefore more efficient and effective.

Background & evolution

In 2015 Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council launched its first ever selective licensing scheme and did so with the help of Home Safe, who's concept they became aware of during their public consultation, as they were keen to work with their PRS as well as help introduce regulation into the sector.

This is when Home Safe was effectively first launched having been adapted to meet this objective, with the initial understanding of the approach being that it was one of co-regulation (the regulator working with the PRS). However, as a result of many lessons learned following this initial understanding, the concept has evolved and is now best explained as Home Safe being a Local Authority 'Delivery Partner'.

There is no 'co' regulation but, simply, a focus on making the Local Authority regulation work more efficiently and, therefore, more effectively. It is a fundamental fact that the Local Authority remain as the Licensing and Enforcing Authority throughout with absolutely no dilution of powers so the term co-regulation is now, definitively, inappropriate. It is the Local Authority's scheme.

A consistent criticism from better performing Landlords was, and still is, that the worst performers do not get dealt with. Our challenge was to develop processes that aided Local Authorities to solve this problem so they could target their enforcement in the right areas resulting in a recognition across the whole PRS that the right people were being dealt with via the licensing scheme route. The overall effect of this is landlord behaviour changes either because of enforcement or the understanding that enforcement is happening.

"Where there are insufficient resources to support an effective enforcement regime, schemes become significantly less effective. In fact, in the course of this research, a lack of enforcement was identified as the single factor that compromises effectiveness more than any other."

MHCLG Independent Review of the Use and Effectiveness of Selective Licensing 2019

“An arrangement of this type is not suited to every type of scheme, but authorities using a delivery partner consistently report positive outcomes, so it may be worth consideration by an authority at the planning stage.”

MHCLG Independent Review of the Use and Effectiveness of Selective Licensing 2019

What we do

We have an online application system to process all applications and collect the Part A fee on behalf of our Local Authority partners. Once the licence is issued by the Local Authority those landlords that apply through Home Safe will then pay a monthly subscription to Home Safe, instead of the Part B fee to the Local Authority, for Home Safe to conduct an agreed number of property inspections and monitor remedial works.

However, this approach also generates the Local Authority a civil penalty income to replace the Part B fee, at the point of involvement, as we will arrange and conduct property inspections, based on HHSRS, on all properties registered with Home Safe, subject to access and occupancy, at the frequencies required by the Local Authority, and thereafter we monitor the completion of any remedial works. There is a breach process for landlords who fail to facilitate access for inspections and for non-engagement in completing remedial works in a timely manner. We will make the Local Authority aware of any landlords that are in breach, which allows their focus to be on enforcement rather than the compliant landlords who will facilitate access and remedy defects.

It is a partnership approach to more efficient and effective enforcement and will ensure the vast majority of issues are resolved without Local Authority involvement or indeed knowledge.

There is no cost to the Local Authority, Home Safe's costs are paid by landlord subscriptions which are always equivalent to the total of the part B fee and are available to be paid monthly to assist Landlords.

Testimonials

“Where the Delivery Partner approach has been successful is in undertaking a significant number of health and safety inspections of their members’ premises, bringing a significant number of serious hazards to the attention of the licence holders. The ability to task officers to concentrate on such inspections without the distractions that routinely divert council officers from performing such tasks is a recognised advantage of the Delivery Partner approach.”

Doncaster MBC ‘End of Scheme Review’ 2021

“I found The Home Safe Scheme to be extremely helpful as the Council’s Selective Licensing Delivery Partner. They gave invaluable advice and support on the implementation, introduction and operation of the Council’s Selective Licensing Scheme. Their balanced advice, inspections, reporting, and support to their landlord members, really helped them to understand legal requirements and to comply without the need for Council intervention or enforcement. This resulted in significant improvements within the designated private rented sector.”

David Addy, former Senior Housing Licensing Officer, Great Yarmouth Borough Council.