



## **CS2 THSS Local Authority Delivery Partner Concept: Applications**

## *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.

The first case study we published explained the concept behind Home Safe to give a broader understanding of what we do. This case study looks at our applications process, how landlords become members of Home Safe and how the fee structure works. As always, this element of our service has benefitted from the lessons learned from previous schemes and allowed us to refine and improve 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 in a way they have traditionally found difficult to do.

Furthermore, we feel the quality of our applications service will greatly assist our Local Authority partners whether they opt for the full Delivery Partner service or not.



Carl Agar  
Chief Executive

## Objective

### *To make landlord licensing enforcement 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 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.

### *Licence applications*

Landlords can either apply for a licence direct with the Local Authority or from the Local Authority once they have registered with the Home Safe scheme. If a Local Authority is using a Delivery Partner, we believe it makes sense to encourage landlords to use that vehicle otherwise the perception could be that there are two schemes in operation which would lead to confusion.

We have a tried and trusted online application system and processing methodology that can be tailored to each Local Authority's needs.

Once registered with Home Safe, landlords will add their properties and select the licence type that they wish to apply for, at that stage they will complete their licence application using Home Safe's user friendly online platform and will submit all the required mandatory certificates and self-declarations to Home Safe as they would if applying for a licence direct with the Local Authority (it's the same application, all agreed with the Local Authority).

Once submitted, and if it is acceptable, Home Safe will confirm receipt of the application and release the completed and fully vetted application to the Local Authority who can complete the process in terms of any further checks they want to conduct before issuing the licence, possibly at a discounted rate as the time taken for them to process this way is reduced. Home Safe will also collect the part A licence fee on behalf of the Local Authority and forward it, on a monthly basis or an otherwise agreed frequency. Home Safe will notify the Local Authority of those applications that are stalled and do not complete within the timeframe required (thus meaning they are operating unlicensed), typically 28 days.

All Managing Agents nominated by scheme member landlords to manage properties in the scheme area will need to provide evidence of their Fit & Proper Person status and that they are members of an approved Redress Scheme.

*"The delivery partner requests the relevant paperwork and details; and submits the application to the authority as an intermediary. In this way, the burden on the authority administrative team is reduced since they no longer have to deal with incomplete or incorrect applications."*

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



## Joining Home Safe

If landlords apply through Home Safe, they will in effect become a Home Safe member and will agree to our code of practice for Landlords and set up a Direct Debit to pay a monthly membership subscription for the 5 year duration of the scheme. This will be equal to the total of the part B fee for any Landlords that apply direct and Landlords will also have the option to pay for their membership up front and in advance if they so wish.

Once a member of the scheme and in receipt of their Local Authority issued licence, any issues regarding the property, landlord or tenant, are referred to Home Safe (notwithstanding the Local Authority could enforce immediately if it so chooses). Home Safe will work with the licence-holder (their member) to resolve the issue whilst compiling the evidence either showing the resolution or supporting the Local Authority should it result in legal action. This will take no longer in time than if the Local Authority were to resolve and all timescales are agreed at the outset and enshrined in a contract between the Local Authority and Home Safe. This leaves the Local Authority free to focus on the non-engaging, non-compliant part of the sector where enforcement action can be more efficiently focused and more effective.

Membership Terms and Conditions are clearly laid out to Landlords, along with a code of practice, maintenance mandate and local charters to deal with specific problems such as ASB, waste, overcrowding, etc., (please see the Home Safe website at [www.thehomesafescheme.org.uk](http://www.thehomesafescheme.org.uk)).

Home Safe then offers support and development for licence holders to compliment the more robust legislative approach taken by our Local Authority partners. Where necessary we will work with Local Authorities to provide the evidence required for enforcement action.

If at any time, for whatever reason (such as cancelling their Direct Debit or being in breach of their membership T&Cs) licence-holders cease to be members of the Home Safe scheme then the licence they obtained through that membership either lapses (other than where they have sold the licensed property) or requires varying, depending on Local Authority preference, and they will then be licensed directly by the Local Authority to be able to continue to legally let their property or properties.

We recommend this is included in the licence conditions for the avoidance of doubt and that the licence lapses as the conditions for acquiring the licence - membership of Home Safe - no longer apply. This also ensures the Local Authority can charge a pro-rata part B licence fee to cover their ongoing compliance monitoring.

*“The Home Safe Scheme were invaluable in the implementation and running of a Selective Licensing scheme in one of the most deprived wards in the country. As our delivery partner, they took on the majority of administrative and inspection work at a greatly reduced cost compared with an in-house solution.”*

**Jason Williams**

**Former Manager, Private Sector Housing, Great Yarmouth Borough Council**