



**CS4 THSS Local Authority
Delivery Partner Concept:
Monitoring Remedial Works
Following Inspections**

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 how we monitor remedial works following inspections. 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.

On the latest scheme, in Great Yarmouth, we were seeing the average time to close issues following inspections was 69 days. Before the pandemic lockdowns this was 46 days.

We therefore feel the processes we have in place to monitor and manage successful completion of remedial works are fit-for-purpose.

Another case study will look further at referrals to the Local Authority and potential for formal enforcement action when members are in breach of our T&Cs.



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, the approach allows them to identify and concentrate on the worst 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.

Monitoring remedial works

Home Safe will conduct an agreed number of property inspections for the duration of the designation by deploying our team of trained HHSRS inspectors to inspect all scheme properties, subject to access and occupancy, and we are committed to using local inspectors where they are available. Inspection reports are emailed to scheme members (Landlords) upon completion of the inspection and any issues raised are graded with a high, medium or low priority (consistent with HHSRS).

The membership maintenance mandate gives strict timescales to respond to these follow-up actions all of which are agreed with the Local Authority. Any issues raised will have photographic evidence within the report.

The follow-up actions are managed by Home Safe who currently work to the following timescales (which are agreed with each Local Authority partner):

High & Medium Priority issues – submit an agreed plan of action within 5 working days (notwithstanding it may necessitate immediate arrangements to safeguard the property and the tenant).

Low Priority issues – are only advisory and no plan of action is required.

An agreed plan of action is confirmation, within the above timescales, that the licence-holder/scheme member will rectify the defects raised using competent tradespeople within an immediate or reasonable timescale agreed with Home Safe.

Once agreed, the plan of action will be managed further by Home Safe with the licence-holder/scheme member required to 'confirm' satisfactory closure of Medium Priority issues whilst providing 'evidence' of satisfactory closure of High Priority issues.

"I would like to express my gratitude towards you and your very professional team in helping me resolve a number of issues as a landlord that I have experienced.

I believe The Home Safe Scheme is an asset to all landlords and would recommend that landlords sign up to your service. Your expertise, advice and support are very valuable and very much appreciated."

Kay Mitchell-Gough
Landlord (West Lindsey District Council scheme)

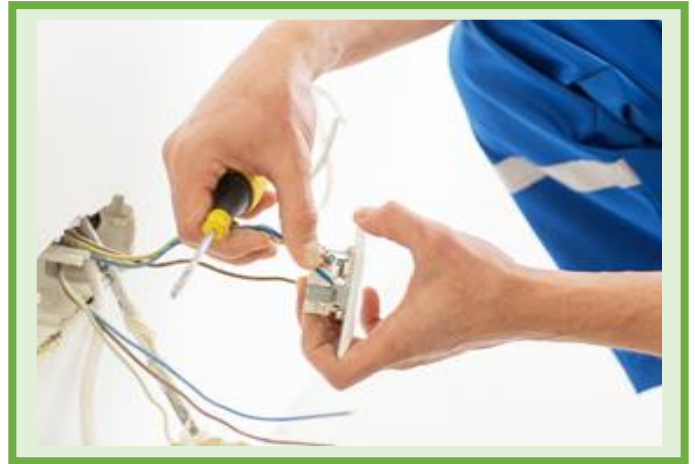
Breach and Local Authority referral

In the event that a member becomes in breach of their Terms and Conditions, then a breach rectification process will be activated. An example of a breach could be a member failing to provide Home Safe access to the property to conduct an inspection, failing to provide a Plan of Action (POA) following an inspection, in 5 working days (for High and Medium priority issues), Home Safe not receiving confirmation and, where applicable, evidence of the POA being completed on or before the agreed date, or for a member cancelling a Direct Debit.

Once a member is deemed to be in breach of their T&Cs a nominal breach administration fee will be added to the members account, to be collected after 28 days and this fee will continue to be charged every 28 days until the matter is resolved, in order to cover the additional administration costs of managing the breach. This also serves as an effective deterrent to a member being in breach, or staying in breach, but the fee is not collected until 28 days from the breach occurring giving plenty of time to resolve. All matters in breach are shared with the Local Authority who can simply monitor the situation, advise Home Safe of their preferred course of action or step in and take enforcement action.

Action by the Local Authority may lead to the member Landlord losing their fit and proper person status and could consequently lead to the termination of their membership with Home Safe and therefore an application for a new or varied licence will need to be made directly to the Local Authority.

At any point, if the member contacts Home Safe and advises that the issue is resolved and any required evidence is provided, then any future dated breach management administration fees will be cancelled immediately and the breach process will come to an end.



It is therefore in the members best interest to avoid a breach situation occurring, or, if it does, to resolve it swiftly.

Our experience tells us that in the vast majority of cases, c90%, issues found on inspections get resolved in a satisfactory manner as measured by our processes but if they don't, we feel we have a fair and robust process to deal with it. We are happy for each Local Authority to set their own timescales within the above process and even change the process if that's what they wish – it is their scheme!

"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