

CASE STUDY

Partnering with Great Yarmouth Borough Council to Improve Standards for Tenants Through Selective Licensing Inspection Programmes

Overview

Following a public consultation, Great Yarmouth Borough Council launched their Selective Licensing scheme in January 2019.

The discretionary scheme was designed to address poor housing conditions for private rented sector tenants within the borough's Nelson Ward.

Working with partner Home Safe, the council delivered an efficient and effective inspection programme as part of the scheme that helped improve housing standards for tenants within the designated area.



1,518

licensed properties inspected over five years.



Properties inspected multiple times throughout the scheme's duration.

The Challenge

An essential part of any successful licensing scheme is the ability for the Local Authority to gain access to the properties within the designation in order to identify the hazards within the properties and enforce the licence conditions. This is critical to driving up standards and improving the living conditions for tenants.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council determined that each property would be inspected multiple times during the five-year licensing period. As stated in the MHCLG 2019 report on Selective Licensing, inspecting all properties under a scheme on more than one occasion can be challenging due to widespread issues of recruiting and retaining inspectors.

Additionally, the council required an effective system to manage compliance, enabling them to identify landlords who were not meeting their legal obligations and potentially compromising tenant safety. This was crucial for ensuring appropriate enforcement actions could be taken against non-compliant landlords.

A Partnership Approach

The council entered into a partnership with Home Safe to support the delivery of their Selective Licensing scheme with a specific remit of providing an online application facility, multiple inspection programmes and a compliance management framework.

To deliver the inspection programme, Home Safe's Health and Housing Safety Rating System (HHSRS) trained inspectors carried out inspections of each of the 1,518 licensed properties throughout the five years. The compliance inspection process evaluated property conditions and instances of non-compliance at three levels—high, medium, and low—based on the associated risk.

The issues identified were then managed to completion following a comprehensive compliance management procedure, implemented by Home Safe. Each licence holder was issued with an electronic copy of their inspection report and full details of the issues that needed resolving.

Where breaches of licence conditions were identified, licence holders were required to provide evidence of completed remedial works and if they failed to do so they were referred to the council for enforcement action. Subsequent inspections by Home Safe assessors helped ensure previous issues were addressed and that landlords were compliant.

The Result

Home Safe's experience in delivering Selective and Additional licensing schemes, combined with HHSRS-trained inspectors and ex-Local Authority housing officers, brought expertise and additional resource to GYBC to help deliver their Selective Licensing scheme across the five year period.

During the first inspection programme, Home Safe's inspectors identified over 4,362 issues within properties, with over 2,115 being high priority.

Over 73% of all properties inspected exhibited at least one high-priority concern, including windows in poor condition with signs of decay and non-functional latches, as well as widespread damp and mould. Additionally, there was an insufficient number of smoke alarms and functioning carbon monoxide detectors in crucial areas, posing a significant risk to tenant safety.

INSPECTION PROGRAMME 1 (IP1):



4,362

issues were identified in total.



2,115

of these issues were high priority.



73% +

of all properties had at least one high-priority concern.

Through the compliance management programme, 95% of these high-priority issues were resolved within 3 months.

This efficiency, achieved through the council's partnership with Home Safe, allowed the council to concentrate their efforts on the remaining 5%, ensuring thorough attention could be given to the most persistent problems.

95% of high priority issues resolved within 3 months during the first inspection programme.

During the second inspection programme (IP2), Home Safe assessors documented a total of 4,127 issues, with damp and mould and poorly functioning windows remaining the primary concerns.

However, on the second round of inspections, the proportion of properties that required no intervention or action increased to 18% up from 11% in the first round. Furthermore, effective compliance management reduced the average time it took for licence holders to resolve issues from 69 days to 43 days.

Equipped with the resources to conduct repeated inspections across multiple properties, Great Yarmouth Borough Council effectively analysed and reported on improvements and changes within their housing stock throughout the duration of their Selective Licensing scheme.

INSPECTION PROGRAMME 2 (IP2):

4,127

issues were identified in total.



Primary hazards included damp & mould, poorly functioning windows and lack of working smoke alarms and CO detectors.

18%

of properties required no intervention, up from 11% in IP1.

43 days

to resolve issues, down from 69 days.

Contact us

To learn more about Home Safe's delivery partnership approach and how we support other Local Authorities please contact Gavin Dick, Partnership Director: gavin.dick@home-safe.org.uk