

Landlord Services Tenancy Audit Policy

Final Version

Document Control

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Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Definitions	4
3. The Policy	5
Household Information	5
Equality Information	5
Rent Discussion	5
Stock Condition	6
Permissions/ Retrospective Permissions	6
Identify Tenant Needs	6
Tenancy Fraud	6
Gaining Access	7
4. Equality Impact Assessment	7

1. Introduction

My Place is a service block within the Council that acts as the managing agent for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham's existing land, property and infrastructure assets. Landlord Services, Customer and Commercial sits within the My Place service block and is the department primarily responsible for the Landlord function of the borough's assets.

Social housing is a valuable asset that provides security and stability to people in housing need. All local authorities have a duty to make the best use of public resources and ensure existing stock is properly managed. One of the ways in which Landlord Services can ensure that LBBDD asset is being properly maintained and managed is by way of completing tenancy audits.

2. Definitions

LSM	Landlord Services Manager
LSO	Landlord Services Officer
KPI	Key Performance Indicator. Tenancy audits are an aspect of the LSO's duty that is performance measured and monitored in monthly one to ones between LSO's and LSM's.
Tenancy Audit	The process of gathering, checking and recording information about who lives in a property and the condition of property.
Household Information	Who lives in the household and their relationships to each other, dates of birth and gender information.
Equalities and Diversity Information	Gender, age, ethnicity, religious belief, sexual orientation and disability of tenants to monitor compliance with our Public Sector Equality Duties
Subletting	If the tenant of a rented property in turn rents out part or all of the property to someone else, this is known as subletting. Subletting all of the council property is not allowed and tenants subletting illegally can face prosecution. Subletting part of the property (i.e. renting a room) may be considered. However written permission would be required from the Landlord.
Tenancy Fraud	Tenancy fraud is a criminal offence. Tenancy fraud involves obtaining properties by deception (for example, individuals claiming to be homeless when they already own a property or are already living at an address), or continuing to claim to be living at a property when they have moved out and/or sublet it.
Under-occupation	When a household is living in a property which has more bedrooms than the allocations policy says it needs, it is considered to be under-occupying the property. The number of bedrooms a household needs is normally based on the number of adults and their relationship to each other, and the age and sex of children.

3. The Policy

Tenancy audits are a mandatory visit that are primarily conducted by Landlord Services Officers, and are necessary to:

- Update household information,
- Check the condition of our property/ asset,
- Help identify any customer support needs and to refer them onto the appropriate team or department,
- Identify tenancy fraud and other breaches of tenancy,
- Discuss the rent account, advising of any rent arrears or rent credit on the account,
- Identify households who are under-occupying properties and appropriately refer if they wish to move to smaller properties.

This aim of this policy and procedure is to set out how Landlord Services conduct tenancy audit visits, how the information collected is treated and used, and what action may be taken as a result of the information obtained.

Household Information

During a tenancy audit Landlord Services will review and update the information currently held on record, which may include:

- Who lives in the household and their relationship to the tenant, dates of birth, and gender
- Contact details, including email address where applicable

Equality and Diversity Information

In addition to the household information Landlord Services will also be asking the tenant(s):

- Equality and diversity information, which includes disabilities, ethnicity, sexual orientation and belief

This is to ensure that we can plan our services better and that we are complying with our Public Sector Equality Duties.

Tenants are not obliged to answer these questions, which is reflected on the tenancy audit form

Rent Discussion

If there are rent arrears on the account, the visiting officer will discuss the circumstances behind why the rent is not being paid by the tenant/s, and will encourage them to make contact with the Rent Department to make an arrangement to clear the rent arrears.

Stock Condition

Tenancy audits provide an opportunity to assess the condition of our properties including, where relevant, gardens. LBBB tenants are expected to:

- Keep the interior of the home clean and in a good state of decoration
- Keep and maintain gardens, trees, lawn and hedges in a neat and tidy condition
- Make good any damage caused to fixtures and fittings or structure of the property by a member of the household or a visitor to the home
- Report to LBBB repairs promptly, any disrepair or defect for which LBBB is responsible for via housing.repairs@lbbd.gov.uk or by calling 0208 592 7388

Any urgent or emergency repairs are identified as part of the tenancy audit will be reported by the officer conducting the audit.

If the condition of the property is unsatisfactory, the officer conducting the audit would discuss this with the tenant(s) during the visit. The tenant(s) would then be informed by the visiting officer that they will be sent a follow up letter within 5 working days of the visit, setting clear objectives and timescales relating to the required improvement.

Permissions/ Retrospective Permissions

Secure tenant(s) have the right to carry out certain improvements with the permission of the Landlord. The visiting officer would take note of any alterations made by the tenant(s) within the property and would look to clarify if permission has been sought from the Landlord prior to the alterations taking place. This will be cross referenced with details held on our system.

If permission has not been sought prior to the alteration taking place, a retrospective permit may be issued by the LSO.

If the LSO deems the un-permitted works to be unsatisfactory, the LSO can request that the tenant(s) reinstate the property to its original condition. If the tenant(s) fail to co-operate, the LSO may take the appropriate legal action in response to this breach to tenancy conditions.

Identifying tenant needs

We will make appropriate referrals arising from tenancy audits. For example, for tenancy support, income management support, benefits advice, antisocial behaviour, safeguarding or disabled adaptations, or any other issues.

Tenancy Fraud

Under the Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act 2013 it is a criminal offence to sub-let or part with possession of social housing. We will take appropriate investigatory and legal action to ensure that our homes are only occupied by those with legal right to be in residence.

In line with current tenancy conditions, tenants must use the property as their only or principal home. Therefore, tenants will be asked to provide proof of identification and proof of address during the visit to ensure that the correct persons are living in the property.

Tenant(s) must also inform their Landlord if they intend to be away from their property for longer than four weeks, in order to avoid the possession proceedings against the address.

Gaining Access

We, the Landlord, carry out tenancy audits on our general needs properties. Visits will be made in person; therefore it is essential that access to the property is obtained.

In most cases, we would notify the tenant(s) of the intended audit (including all relevant information about the purpose of the visit) either in writing or by phone at least 48 hours prior to the date of the tenancy audit. However, there may be cases whereby the Landlord Services Officer may need to conduct a tenancy audit without any prior notice, often referred to as a 'cold call'.

The conditions of tenancy state that a tenant must allow access in order to inspect, service, repair, improve or carry out maintenance work.

Failure to provide access to carry out a mandatory tenancy audit after more than 3 fixed appointments may be considered by the Landlord as a breach in the conditions of tenancy, and therefore sufficient reason to take action against the tenancy.

4. Equality Impact Assessment

An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out on this policy.

This involves assessing the effects of the policy and subsequent service provided to our customers in respect of their age, disability, race, religion/belief, sexual orientation, and/ or gender identity to ensure equal and fair access for all.

Conducting an Equality Impact Assessment assists us to make sure that the needs of people are accounted for when developing and implementing policies and services.