

APPENDIX 3 - Landlords

UAS Properties

1, What do you do when a tenant complains about poor conditions;

Firstly is to make an appointment with the tenant, see what the problems are. If the problems are genuine call our maintenance team and get all the works done quickly. We will do the works quickly as an unhappy tenant will make excuses of paying the rent. If all the works are completed that should give no excuse for the tenant not to pay the rent. Main problems we have with poor conditions are condensation as educating a tenant about condensation is always difficult. Also with the cost of gas/electric tenants find it harder to keep the property to a warm temperature, and this has a knock on effect with living conditions.

2, What process do you find tenants

70% of tenants are normally are found word of mouth, I always feel if you treat your tenants fairly and you have a good working relationship this is the best source of finding good tenants. For this you need to provide good service on repairs and be flexible on rent, also no administration charges should be charged to the tenants. 20% of our other tenants are refereed by the council homeless team who have genuinely fallen on hard times, but are good tenants and have learned the hard way so they will always behave. The remaining 10% are found by letting agents who play a good role in finding suitable tenants.

3, What effect has the national Rent Deposit Scheme had for you as a Landlord:

This has had very little effect with my business the only effect would be the hassle of registering the deposit and updating when an tenancy comes to an end, I find this rather time consuming. We as landlords always return the deposit to the tenant up until now, as minor wear and tear to save time and keep a good reputation the best and easier option is to return the deposit back in full.

4, Would you take a Tenant on housing benefit? Has the change of Universal credit affected this?

Over the past 20 years in this profession I find the Universal Credit the biggest problem to any social Landlord. Over the years we have worked closely with Wolverhampton Council homeless team in rehousing tenants that claim Housing Benefits. There has always been obstacles problems with the Housing benefit system, but you could always work with the Benefits section in collecting rents. New rules in April 2011 regarding LHA rates were introduced, but as Landlords we would reduce the rents on each property to LHA in order for rent payments made directly to the Landlords. The negative would be reduced rent but the positive was that we would always get paid, and weighing up the options we decided to reduce all rents to LHA rates. If there were any problems you would ring housing benefits or even go in and you could deal with the problem. This Universal credit is the biggest problem facing Landlords and tenants, to request direct payment you have to be in 8 weeks in arrears. If you need to contact Universal credit your morning or afternoon would take up most of your day dealing with one tenant. You cannot see anyone in person, just an obstacle after another. We have over 120 Tenants claiming housing benefits from, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Stafford and Sandwell; we have only 3 tenants on Universal Credit. All 3 tenants are in rent arrears of 4 to 12 weeks, as they have spent the rent instead of forwarding for rental payments. For this reason

we do not accept anyone on housing benefit. This has made us have more voids to our properties, but frankly this is far better than having tenants live in your properties and not pay rent. We will continue move our business model away from Housing Benefits, as we struggling with the Universal Credit. Any existing tenants that would be put on Universal credit in the future, we would most likely evict using correct procedure as this system does not work at this moment in time.

5, What incentives can we offer to Landlords to work with vulnerable tenants

Firstly the support has to be there not just in writing, a landlord would need a contact who he or she can contact 24hrs. As I have worked with these types of tenants who have been offered support, but they never receive nowhere near the support required. I always find it is the Landlord picking up the pieces, and something I have stayed well away from after having my fingers burnt. The only other alternative would be to give more housing allowance to vulnerable tenants.

6, Are you aware of the rent to confidence scheme, if you are what are your thoughts on it ?

I am very aware of this scheme; I have held meetings in my office with the council picking my brain about this matter. I have registered about 20 properties on this scheme the reason being only to help the scheme take off. Will the scheme take off, I think it will struggle a good idea in principle but there no incentives for Landlords to advertise on the scheme. Also I find the prospective tenants that ring you are time wasters and you should have a telephone vetting scheme before you pass any details on for landlords.

7, What do you think would improve the standards in the private rented housing sector.

For some reason all landlords are tarnished with the same brush by the public and tenants and for this reason makes my job much harder. I do feel the good landlords need to reward for the job they do, as most Landlords become social workers for some tenants. So some reward system should be in place, not a star reward but something different. Also with all the rules and regulations red tape Landlords have to provide such a good service these days but the rents remain stagnated, I do feel in Wolverhampton the Local Housing allowance needs to rise as rents have remained or decreased since 2008.

Also I feel with the Universal Credit I feel rouge landlords who can work the system will be cashing in on venerable tenants, when they have nowhere to go.