



Tenant Report: Move-In

Summary

At Tenant Panels in October 2023 and January 2024, tenants raised concerns about the experience of moving-in to a Brighton & Hove Seaside Community Homes (Seaside) property, identifying trends in the experiences of the tenants present which indicated issues with the current process. Additionally, Seaside staff identified trends in the issues raised by phone, email, and feedback survey, by tenants who had recently moved-in to a Seaside property, and fed this back to the Tenant Panel. The Tenant Panel requested a tenant-led in-depth review of the move-in process and this was approved by Seaside staff.

On 9th April Seaside hosted an all-day, in-person event for involved tenants to review the process of moving-in to a Seaside Homes property and produce a report of recommendations. Nine tenants attended the event.

Review

Tenants were provided with a range of relevant documents and information to review in order to provide robust assessment and make evidence-led recommendations. This included:

- Brighton & Hove City Council Temporary Accommodation (TA) Lettings Procedure
- TA Housing Officer Tenancy Sign-Up Checklist
- Draft TA Visiting Officer Checklist
- Moving-in section of Seaside Tenant Handbook
- The TA Sign-Up pack of forms and information sheets given to tenants at viewing/tenancy sign up
- Presentation from Seaside staff who shadowed a Viewing and Sign-up
- Presentation and Q&A from TA Deputy Manager
- Access to Seaside staff throughout the day for any questions
- Report of relevant tenant feedback from surveys and call logs over the past year. This included “Welcome” surveys sent to tenants soon after they move-in, the Annual Tenant Satisfaction Survey, and a specific survey sent out in advance of this review requesting feedback on moving-in from the wider involved tenant base.

Key issues

Tenants identified the following key areas of concern:

- Short time-frame (1 to 3 days) between viewing the property and move-in date makes organising the move difficult, particularly in terms of applying for financial assistance with moving costs and essential furniture.
- Setting up utilities: finding out who the utilities provider is, getting gas uncapped, setting up a new contract or top-up key card, and debt left on the meter from the previous occupier.
- Information: tenants are expected to take in a huge amount of information in a very short time during the viewing and tenancy sign-up, it is difficult to take in all the



information from the sign-up pack of forms and documents and the housing officer's instructions and advice. This is particularly difficult because of the stress of the situation. Some tenants may need more help with the move-in even if they do not have identified "support needs".

Recommendations

The tenant's present produced the following list of recommendations to improve the move-in experience for Seaside Homes tenants.

#	Recommendation
1	<p>Create a clear and simple tenant facing Moving In Checklist that provides a step-by-step of the key actions tenants need to take from the Viewing through to the Move-in, and includes the information the tenant needs in order to complete these steps.</p> <p>Checklist to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reminder to re-schedule an engineer if you are out when they come round to uncap the gas – and provide the phone number.• Warning about possible debt on the meter and reminder to speak to the utilities company straight away and not to put an existing key card in the meter until the utilities company has reset it.• How to set up rent and service charge payments.• Main contacts for sorting out furniture and white goods (including the Council's stock of white goods). <p>Space for tenant/Housing Officer to add details of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Utility provider and meter reading on moving-in day○ Rent and Service Charge amounts○ Location of water stopcock○ Location of bins○ Any fire escape arrangements
2	TA to advise tenants on the average length of time they could be staying in a property.
3	Look into whether having British Gas as the standard provider at the start of a tenancy would simplify the process and if so, whether it would be possible to join the Council's pilot scheme.
4	Find out what scheme will be replacing the Council's Local Discretionary Social Fund (which closed at the end of March 2024) and publicise the scheme to tenants.
5	TA to maximise the time between the viewing and the move-in date, and consider on a case-by-case basis pushing back the move-in date in circumstances where the tenant is otherwise unable to arrange the move (and financial assistance with the move) in the allotted timeframe.



6	Housing Officer to send a follow up email after the initial phone call to arrange a viewing. The email is to include the Offer Letter and Tenant Moving In Checklist.
7	While tenants may not be assessed by their Homeless Prevention Officer as having a support need, there may be a particular issue that they need help with. Not everyone will need help with everything – it would be great if the Housing Officers could identify and flag up any potentially problematic areas at the beginning of the process. This could be in relation to language, literacy, mental health, whether the tenant owns a smart phone, and the amount of belongings, furniture and white goods they have. There may also be challenges that are property specific.
8	TA to complete tenancy sign-up and give the tenant the key to the property at the Viewing, so they have more time to set up utilities and organise removals.
9	TA to avoid viewings and sign ups on a Friday or over a Bank Holiday weekend (as this can result in a prolonged period without utilities as tenants are not able to find out their account number).
10	Housing Officer to provide details of the utilities provider and meter readings to all tenants.
11	At the Viewing, Housing Officer to show the location of the water stopcock and bins and cover the fire escape arrangements for all tenants.
12	Tenants to be given a copy of any documents they have signed.
13	Visiting Officer to develop a staff checklist to ensure that all concerns identified in this report are checked in on at the visit.

Next Steps

The recommendations will be reviewed by TA and Seaside staff and the Seaside Board of Trustees, and an Action Plan will be developed in response to this report. This will be shared with all tenants via our website and SMS service. Updates on the progress of the Action Plan will be shared regularly with tenants until all agreed actions are completed.