



Improving access to the Private Rented Sector

A route out of homelessness

Crisis



- National charity for single homeless people.
- To fight homelessness and empower people to fulfil their potential and transform their lives
- Develop innovative services
- Campaign for a more inclusive society
- Raise awareness of the causes and nature of homelessness, and share good practice.

Crisis & the PRS



- Single homeless people are generally unable to access social housing
- Historically untapped housing resource for those on benefits and low incomes
- Can enhance choice and integration
- Tenancy breakdown in the private sector is a common cause of homelessness.

National policy context



- Alternative to diminishing social lettings
- *'Sustainable Communities'* emphasised role in reducing use of temporary accommodation (for 2010 target)
- Part of prevention agenda (London Councils *'Prevention Works'*)
- Enables move-on for clients of supported accommodation
- Key resource for single homeless people.

National policy context of deposit guarantee schemes



- Local schemes provide access to PRS
- Deposit guarantees and cash deposits
- CLG have repeatedly advocated the use of deposit guarantee schemes
- Scottish Government set target of deposit guarantee scheme in every area
- Welsh Assembly dedicated funding stream
- **NOT** the Tenancy Deposit Scheme.

Crisis

Crisis SmartMove launched 1997



- *For those without recourse to other housing options*
- *Franchise model deposit guarantee scheme with performance standards*
- *Delivered by local homeless agencies in 25 locations*
- *Over 10,000 people helped into accommodation*
- *Evaluation found great majority ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with accommodation.*
- *“Experience of schemes in widely varying housing markets showed that it is possible to operate deposit guarantee schemes and that reasonable standards of accommodation can be provided.”*

Crisis

Crisis SmartSkills launched 2005



- *Individualised accredited learning programme for new tenants*
- *Budgeting and communication plus a range of additional learning opportunities*
- *Over 100 people participated last year across five projects*
- *Improving quality of life, and progression towards employment.*

Crisis

National advisory role 2006



- *Providing information, guidance and training to deposit schemes throughout the UK*
- *Over 200 attendees at training and best practice sharing events*
- *Bi-monthly news bulletin and bespoke resources*
- *Working with Scottish Executive, Welsh Assembly, and the London Housing Foundation to promote and support the work of deposit schemes in tackling homelessness*
- *Good Practise Guide, cost effectiveness evaluation and additional research and resources to be launched early 2008.*

Features of effective deposit schemes



- Services for landlords
- Services for tenants
- Organisational strength
- Clear scheme objectives and outcomes
- Partnership working.

CLG's *"Settled Housing Solutions in the Private Rented Sector"* states deposits:



"can make it significantly easier for people to secure accommodation in the private rented sector and also provide comfort to prospective landlords"

...but also cautions that...

"on their own they are unlikely to be sufficient to increase access to the private rented sector, but as part of a package of incentives they can encourage both landlords and tenants to consider direct lets."

Services for landlords

Landlords who managed properties themselves tended to be quite isolated from sources of information, advice and support (CLG)



- Ensuring Housing Benefit is paid
- Supporting tenants
- Named point of contact for resolving issues
- Filling voids
- Taking up references
- Inventories
- Rent-in-advance
- Explaining landlords rights & responsibilities
- Action to prevent arrears & chase late payments
- Advice on repairs and improvements.

Package of incentives



- Dependent on resources and local housing market
- Must be based on identified needs of local private sector landlords
- Must be flexible and responsive in order to prevent homelessness and maintain relationships with landlords.

Services for tenants



- Form filling (i.e. Community Care Grant)
- Completing HB & income maximisation
- Ensure understanding of rights & responsibilities
- Ongoing support (links with Supporting People)
- Mediation with landlord
- Applying for DHP
- Advice & guidance on searching for a property
- Savings schemes
- Moving in packs
- Links to skills and employment projects.

Resources



- Dedicated member of staff
 - negotiation skills
 - good interpersonal skills
 - confident and intuitive
- Strong but varied funding arrangements.

Objectives and outcomes



- Enable people to access housing
- Establish sustainable tenancies
- Change attitudes among landlords
- Improve quality of PRS stock
- Reduce pressure on social or supported housing.

Partnership working



- Relationship with Housing Benefit will dictate success of scheme
- Referral agencies
- Environmental health
- Empty Homes
- Choice based lettings
- Floating support
- Skills and employment services
- Local strategic planning.

“I get help with everything from connecting my electricity to furniture delivery. Being back in the private rented sector has not been easy. It’s been an uphill struggle and it has been difficult for me to sometimes come to terms with the responsibility of having my own place. But little by little and with SmartMove’s involvement I am slowly getting my life back together.” – SmartMove client



“My relationship with my mum and step dad is fantastic now. They’re happy and I think they finally have something to feel proud about. My life’s changed so dramatically that I can hardly believe it myself. I’ve been offered a job when I complete my course. I have so many plans for the future. I want to teach nail services, pass my driving test, be financially stable, travel, and learn a language. I could go on and on.” – SmartSkills client

Crisis vision



- Promoting (effective) deposit schemes as a key approach to tackling homelessness
- Development of SmartMove & SmartSkills
- Mapping provision & increasing coverage
- Raising quality of schemes through best practice guidance, training and resources
- Identifying barriers and advocating on behalf of deposit schemes.



Web: www.crisis.org.uk/page.builder/about_smartmove.html

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