

What works?

Tackling rogue landlords and
improving the private rented sector

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Introduction

Ensuring private homes are safe and decent

Shelter has been campaigning for action to tackle the small but dangerous minority of rogue landlords in the private rented sector who make people's lives a misery. We have called on local authorities to commit to do all they can to stamp out these landlords. And we have worked with the Department for Communities and local government to develop detailed guidance on how local authorities might do this: gov.uk

These landlords condemn their tenants to living in rundown, unsafe, or overcrowded properties. They often neglect their properties, avoiding making the necessary, legal improvements. Or they will intimidate those who speak out, threatening them with eviction.

Equally, more than a third of private rented homes fail to meet the government's minimum decency standards. And serious, Category I hazards are present in more than a fifth of rented homes in England. This includes serious electrical hazards and damp.

This is a significant concern, especially at a time when the private rented sector is housing more vulnerable households and families with children. The sector is growing rapidly: nine million people in England now rent privately, an increase of 72 percent over the last 10 years. Private renters also make up a disproportionate share of the people approaching Shelter for advice every day.

Although times are tough, it has never been more important for local authorities to tackle rogue landlords and improve the quality of private rented homes in their areas.

Emerging good practice

Throughout our campaign Shelter has been fortunate enough to engage with a wide range of local authorities. We have come across some fantastic examples of local authorities using innovative and cost-effective techniques to tackle rogue landlords and improve their local private rented sector.

We have created this guide in order to:

- celebrate emerging good practice
- inspire other local authorities
- stimulate ideas and innovation in local private rented sector policy.

This guide is not intended to make policy recommendations but to provide a flavour of some of the positive activity taking place across England.

During a time of increased resource constraints many local authorities are using pioneering, resource-savvy techniques to fight rogue landlords. These local authorities recognise the urgency of the situation, as unprecedented numbers of families and individuals are now at the mercy of the private rented sector.

The guide focuses on seven local authorities in detail: **Amber Valley Borough Council, Burnley Borough Council, the London Borough of Haringey, Leeds City Council, Manchester City Council, Pendle Borough Council, and Peterborough City Council.**

We hope that these examples provide a representative and relatable sample of the good practice emerging across the country.

For more information, or for information on signing up to Shelter's Evict Rogue Landlords campaign, please contact Martha Mackenzie at: martha_mackenzie@shelter.org.uk or 0344 515 2274.

We are always interested in the positive work being undertaken by councils across England. If you have examples of emerging good practice please share them with us, using the contact details above.

For detailed information on the campaign and its recent successes visit Shelter's campaign web pages: shelter.org.uk/campaigns

For information on tenant support and advice visit Shelter's housing advice pages: shelter.org.uk/advice

What does good practice look like?

Any proactive local authority intervention in the private rented sector should be driven by a thorough understanding of local market dynamics and need. For this reason good practice will vary considerably; what works in one area will not necessarily work in another.

The Local Housing Requirement Assessment Working Group's web tool, howmanyhomes.org, can help local authorities develop robust and objective evidence regarding the full range of housing requirements in their area.

However, our extensive conversations with local authorities suggest that there are several common themes, across which examples of good practice consistently emerge.

This guide looks at how local authorities can use the following actions to tackle rogue landlords and improve conditions in their private rented sector:

- Proactively manage and proactively inspect properties to make sure that they are appropriate homes for renters.
- Adequately resource and support their local enforcement teams.
- Take tough enforcement action against rogue landlords. And publicise their tough stance in the local press.
- Advise renters and give them the support they need to bring complaints to the council.
- Implement a clear complaints procedure and harness the skills of other agencies.
- Proactively manage their local private rented sector through accreditation and licensing schemes.
- Work to educate tenants and landlords of their rights and responsibilities.

Crucially, one element will usually not make the difference. It is important to develop a combination of different initiatives and interventions. Equally important is a willingness to try new, innovative approaches, even when facing increasing resource constraints. Many of the examples within this guide prove how possible this is.

This guide will focus on seven local authorities. But in order to explore the core themes in more detail it will first unpick the selected actions alongside accompanying examples from a broader range of local authorities. These examples have been sourced following the most recent iterations of Shelter's Evict Rogue Landlords campaign and from interviews carried out as part of this emerging good practice project.

Proactive inspection and proactive management of the local private rented sector

Proactive management enables local authorities to identify private rented homes that should be prioritised for improvement. This can be a particularly effective way of dealing with housing conditions. It allows councils to understand their local sector and pre-empt any problems that may occur, rather than solely responding to complaints.

Reading Borough Council undertakes a private sector stock condition survey periodically. Councillors and residents are also encouraged to systematically report problem properties through the council's website.

Blackpool Borough Council's 'Monitoring and Intervention in the Private Rented Sector' scheme linked up housing, planning, police, and fire services to knock on all doors across the inner wards in order to identify private rented properties. This action provided evidence to support the case for a, now established, selective licensing scheme in the South Beach area. Blackpool is now using geographic information system mapping to establish problem properties, laying on data from the police, housing benefits and Council Tax, as well as the private sector homes team.

Slough Borough Council completed a thermal imaging aerial map of Slough to both identify where unauthorised private rented properties are located and to also identify where the properties that are losing the most heat in cold conditions are located. A public web portal will shortly enable every Slough resident and landlord to identify their own property and establish whether the property is efficient at retaining heat or not.

Adequately resourced and supported enforcement teams

In a time of increasing resource constraints, adequately supporting enforcement teams will always be challenging. However, a number of councils are working to ensure that improving private rented conditions and tackling rogue landlords are a priority. Equally, local authorities have also been able to uncover new, innovative sources of funding.

These councils understand the knock-on effect of poor private sector housing: an increased strain on local health services and detrimental public health outcomes; an increased strain on local police and fire services; and a destructive impact on community cohesion.

Torbay Borough Council has recently allocated £100,000 to the council's Community Safety Department. Working alongside other agencies the department has been asked to undertake targeted enforcement action across private rented properties in Torbay.

The recent changes in public health offer new funding opportunities for local authorities. The new preventative health environment presents an exciting opportunity for local authorities to think innovatively about tackling the rogue landlords and poor conditions that are putting renters at risk. Health and Wellbeing Boards can be used to facilitate a multi-agency response to poor private sector housing. This is particularly important at a time of increased budgetary constraints.

Sheffield City Council has started to use its new public health strategy to target the poor condition of properties in the private rented sector. The council has recognised the opportunities presented by the new public health environment.

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has a programme of selective licensing designations in low demand neighbourhoods where there are also high levels of anti-social behaviour. As part of this programme they proactively inspect all privately rented properties to help protect tenants. This is supported by health funding.

Use of prosecutions as method of formal enforcement, when notices are not complied with

We know that many local authorities are stepping up enforcement action against rogue landlords. Between 2010/11 and 2011/12 the number of successful prosecutions made against private landlords increased by 77 percent. By serving notices under the Housing Act 2004, and making prosecutions where these are not complied with, local authorities can send a strong message to all landlords that poor conditions and practices won't be tolerated.

[Shelter's prosecutions map shows just how successful some councils across England have been at prosecuting rogue landlords.](#)

In a time of tight resources it is important to emphasise that tough, well-publicised enforcement can save money in the long run. By ensuring that successful prosecutions of rogue landlords are publicised locally, all landlords will be encouraged to ensure that their properties meet legal requirements, reducing the need for enforcement in future.

In 2008/9 **Oxford City Council** prosecuted 15 landlords and upheld 592 complaints about hazards. In the following two years, upheld complaints about hazards fell to 508 and 509 respectively, at a time when the sector came under increasing pressure. Similarly complaints about harassment fell from 35 to 25 between 2008/9 and 2010/11. This demonstrates that tough action, coupled with extensive publicity, can reduce immediate problems and is effective in sending out a strong message to amateur and rogue landlords.

Advise renters and give them the support they need to bring complaints to the council

It is crucial to ensure that tenants not only have access to a clear reporting procedure for complaints, but that councils proactively support and protect tenants that are likely to be at risk.

This will help make sure that any subsequent action is appropriately targeted. Joined up enforcement and advice will minimise the fallout from the actions of rogue landlords.

The London Borough of Lewisham employs a team of specialist private sector advisers to advise private tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities and ensure compliance with the law. These advisers act as mediators; will attend incidents and directly intervene where necessary; and help tenants to obtain injunctive relief.

High Peak Borough Council tries to target hard-to-reach groups to ensure that they are aware of the minimum standards of housing that they can expect to have.

Implement a clear complaints procedure and harness the skills of other agencies

Clear procedures and effective triaging help local authorities reduce the scale of their workload resulting from complaints. More resources can then be made available for proactive work. Working closely with other agencies also enables local authorities to maximise their existing resources and pool expertise.

East Hertfordshire District Council has a staged approach to responding complaints, offering advice and opportunities for remote resolution, before following up the more serious cases.

Slough Borough Council engages with their area health authority to ensure they can refer vulnerable tenants with infectious lung diseases such as tuberculosis.

Rushmoor Borough Council investigates all allegations of poor conditions within three days of receipt. If there is an imminent risk to residents they will visit the property that day. They work closely with Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service to ensure that properties are safe beyond normal office hours.

Building a proactive relationship with the local private rented sector through accreditation and licensing schemes

Local authorities should also engage strategically with their local private rented sector and actively promote rigorous landlord accreditation schemes. These schemes can help landlords improve their business and give them a market advantage and access to incentives. Some of the most successful authorities have been those who work positively with law-abiding landlords, building up relationships that discourage offending.

The London Borough of Lewisham provides incentives to landlords to encourage higher standards of property management in the private rented sector. Discounts are given on fees charged to landlords applying for licences who are accredited. Grants and loans given to those landlords bringing their properties up to Lewisham standards are also conditional on landlords being accredited.

Reading Borough Council was one of the pioneers of landlord accreditation schemes. It has run its own scheme for 10 years. It now works in partnership with the National Landlords Association to provide an accreditation scheme that is also recognised more widely. In addition to this Reading support good landlords by offering free or discounted training.

More councils are also using their powers to implement additional and selective licensing schemes as a means to proactively manage their private rented sectors. Councils should consider using these powers when there are areas with particularly bad conditions that require close attention. However, each local authority needs to consider the particular conditions of their rented sector when developing a strategy to improve rented housing quality and conditions.

Stoke on Trent City Council has introduced two selective licensing schemes in designated problem areas. The council is commencing prosecution procedures for landlords who have failed to obtain a license. They administer a landlord accreditation scheme that covers several neighbouring authorities, and also have a dedicated empty homes team taking action, including compulsory purchase, to bring long-term empty properties back into use.

Work to educate tenants and landlords of their rights and responsibilities

Councils that put a premium on landlord and tenant education can reduce negligence. The quality of the sector will be driven up as landlords realise it is in their best interest to make repairs, and tenants are aware of the improvements they can ask for.

Any attempts to educate should be sustained and multi-faceted. They should be aimed at landlords and tenants, focusing on both rights and responsibilities. It is important that education schemes are supported by robust enforcement procedures, so landlords have a clear incentive to co-operate and tenants have faith that their complaints will be registered.

Sheffield City Council has developed a range of information and advice leaflets that provide information to all private landlords and tenants and encourages them to seek further help where necessary. They have also developed an upgraded landlord training scheme, which is used in appropriate circumstances as an alternative to prosecution, alongside a general training course.

South Staffordshire District Council's Housing Options team employ a dedicated officer to work closely with private landlords. They recognise that they have a vital role to play in providing good-quality, local accommodation.

What works?

The next section of the guide focuses on seven local authorities in detail: Amber Valley Borough Council, Burnley Borough Council, the London Borough of Haringey, Leeds City Council, Manchester City Council, Pendle Borough Council, and Peterborough City Council.

It profiles how these local authorities have used a combination of different actions to take a tough line against rogue landlords and improve the private rented sector. These local authorities have demonstrated how important a mixed, localised approach is. They have been careful to select resource-savvy techniques that work for their local area and that fit with the wider priorities of the council.

These seven local authorities cover a broad regional area and contain a mix of district, unitary, and metropolitan councils. By painting a picture of 'what is possible', their profiles will hopefully spark innovation and generate new ideas in local private rented sector policy.

Amber Valley Borough Council

Amber Valley is a district council in Derbyshire, the East Midlands. It is a semi-rural area covering a number of small towns including Alfreton, Belper, Ripley and Heanor. **There are roughly 6,200 private rented properties in Amber Valley (12 percent of properties overall). This has grown by 119 percent since 2001 according to the 2011 Census.**

What works for Amber Valley?

Building strong links with the local police service.

The council and Derbyshire Police jointly identify properties of shared interest and co-ordinate enforcement. Officers share intelligence at monthly tasking meetings, which helps the housing team identify the properties that need to be targeted for enforcement.

Engaging multi-agency teams. Amber Valley have also developed positive relationships with multi-agency teams that work with families. The housing team has been able to raise awareness of key hazards and work jointly with the family intervention team to address standards.

Proactively inspecting local private rented sector properties. The council is gradually identifying the properties that are in need of repair. On a rolling five-year cycle the housing team inspect known high-risk properties. When needed they will carry out these inspections with a representative from the fire service. Throughout the year Amber Valley actively seek out new properties to add to their 'high risk' list.

Responding to complaints through home visits.

A tenant may report a minor complaint but upon inspection a much larger breach of the regulations is uncovered. As a result the team prioritises these site visits so they can assess the needs of the tenants.

Joined-up enforcement and advice. The issues experienced by private tenants are often very similar to those who live in socially rented accommodation, but their access to support and advice is more restricted. As a result, when Amber Valley receive a complaint they will usually seek to provide housing advice first, as there is only so much the tenant can do without proper information and representation. They will still issue notices, or threaten notices to landlords, but their immediate concern is with the tenant.

Establishing a reputation for following through with enforcement notices. Amber Valley have a good reputation for following through with enforcement notices. When threatened, landlords will usually clean up their act, or respond to the specific complaint, swiftly. If the tenant is evicted, or chooses to leave the property regardless, the council will seek to prevent the landlord from re-letting their property until the necessary adjustments have been made.

What does Amber Valley's rogue landlords team look like?

In Amber Valley, all the housing-related roles exist within one team. Each officer has a clearly defined role and the private rented sector features in everyone's work.

The housing team also contains the Empty Homes Officer, who works alongside the enforcement officers to ensure that properties are brought up to scratch and brought back into use.

The team is small (eight people) but they enable a significant joined-up action, by all being situated under one roof.

Burnley Borough Council

Burnley is a district council in south Lancashire, the North West. It is named after its largest town but also contains a number of villages and hamlets, including Hapton and Worsthorne. **There are roughly 7,200 private rented sector properties in Burnley (19 percent of properties overall). This has grown by 81 percent since 2001 according to the 2011 Census.**

What works for Burnley?

Engaging other agencies. When appropriate, Burnley work alongside other agencies such as the fire service, floating support services that offer housing support for tenants, social services, and the NHS. In addition they also work closely with services internal to the council such as planning and building control (in relation to HMOs, potentially unauthorised building works, and potentially dangerous buildings) and environmental health (for dirty backyards, anti-social behaviour, and cases of statutory nuisance).

Working positively with landlords and reaching out informally. In an effort to work positively with landlords, and give them sufficient opportunity to fix problems, Burnley will try to ensure that, following a complaint, the council contacts each landlord directly. If repairs are not completed within a reasonable timeframe Burnley will follow up with a formal inspection and a Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) assessment. But they are keen to ensure that their service is balanced: working with both the landlord and the tenant to improve standards.

Supporting and advising tenants through surgeries and referrals. If a tenant complains about harassment or potential eviction the housing enforcement team will provide them with basic advice. If detailed advice is necessary Burnley will refer the tenant to the council's housing advice team and provide them with the contact details for Shelter, who they work with on a variety of tenancy issues. A similar approach is adopted through the selective licensing designation. Burnley offer a weekly surgery that is open to any tenant, resident, or landlord in the area.

Supporting the Private Rented Sector Forum.

The forum meets every two months and is made up of landlords, letting agents, tenants, and the local authority. Issues are debated and the council is able to consult with the forum on key developments within the sector. With the support of this forum, the council periodically run landlord evenings where a wide range of issues impacting on the sector are discussed and debated.

Educating tenants and landlords about their rights and responsibilities.

Embedded across all Burnley's private rented sector processes is the aim to educate both landlords and tenants about how to improve standards in the sector. As part of the selective licensing scheme it is conditional that licensed landlords attend a landlord development day. This course is run by the National Landlords Association and focuses on starting, ending, and managing a tenancy. It covers both legislation and best practice. Accredited landlords are also invited to attend the training free of charge.

What does Burnley's complaints procedure look like?

When a complaint is deemed 'urgent' the housing enforcement service will usually send out an officer within 24 hours.

If the case is judged to be a 'standard' complaint, inspection will be completed within two weeks.

When responding to a complaint Burnley first ask the tenant whether they have already contacted their landlord and, if so, what the response was. If the tenant has not contacted their landlord, unless the hazard is very serious, they will ask them to do so before coming back to the council.

London Borough of Haringey

Haringey is a London Metropolitan Borough in north London bordering Waltham Forest and Islington. It is a borough of contrasts: both geographically and demographically. **There are roughly 32,000 private rented sector properties in Haringey (31 percent of properties overall). This has grown by 48 percent since 2001 according to the 2011 Census.**

What works for Haringey?

Creating a cross-department Rogue Landlords Working Group. This group looks at how the council can work in partnership with other agencies to solve a variety of local issues and reduce resource constraints. Following the work of this group the council are keen to move away from reactive enforcement and move towards a strategic programme centred on licensing and planning, which they hope will change the conversation with landlords.

Publicising successful prosecutions. Successful prosecutions are publicised by the council's communications team in local newspapers, on the council's website, via the council's Twitter account and the responsible cabinet member's Twitter account.

Strict enforcement action. Haringey are stepping up their enforcement programme to deal with the growing costs of delayed improvement works. If notices aren't complied with within the given timeframes then the council will opt for prosecution for failure to comply.

Using licensing and accreditation. Haringey promote the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme and UK Landlord Accreditation Scheme and offer regular training in partnership with them. They currently have an additional licensing scheme for smaller HMOs. The council are looking at introducing a further additional licensing scheme later this year and they are also building a business case for implementing a selective licensing scheme in the borough.

Holding landlords forums and engaging with 'good' landlords. The council hold a regular landlord forum and distribute a landlords' newsletter. The forums are used as a platform to look at current local issues as well as wider sector issues and topical discussion points. The housing improvement team have a good relationship with the landlords and letting agents that they work with. The council tries to engage positively with those landlords who are initially non-compliant in order to make them 'good landlords' through advice, guidance, training, and assistance.

Training sessions for private tenants. These sessions are currently available to all clients who have been referred to the council's private sector options Home Finder Scheme. Developed in conjunction with the North London Sub Region the training gives prospective tenants an understanding of their responsibilities. It covers a wide range of topics including: solutions to common tenancy problems, how to be a good neighbour, dealing with disrepair, condensation, and housing benefit issues.

What does Haringey's rogue landlords team look like?

The housing improvement team has 14 full-time officers dealing with the private rented sector. This team collectively investigate and deal with rogue landlords.

It contains a group of five officers who deal reactively with complaints from tenants, or members of the public about non-licensable HMO properties and family homes. The rest of the staff work on mandatory licensing and relicensing of HMOs and the licensing of HMOs in the borough's additional HMO licensing area.

Leeds City Council

Leeds is a large, metropolitan council in West Yorkshire, Yorkshire and the Humber. It is the second largest local government district in England (by population). The district includes the city as well as a number of commuter towns, such as Otley and Pudsey. **There are roughly 57,000 private rented sector properties in Leeds (18 percent of properties overall). This has grown by 77 percent since 2001 according to the 2011 Census.**

What works for Leeds?

Sourcing funding opportunities for increased resource. In April 2013 a new team of 11 officers was formed. This team has been created to proactively inspect properties in targeted areas of the city, addressing the worst areas of housing. This proactive team aims to use the best practice learned from the selective licensing scheme without the bureaucracy and costs associated.

Leeds sourced the funding for this team through New Homes Bonus cash. Some of the cash awarded to the council has been allocated to the private sector to address empty properties and poor housing standards. It is a results-based initiative; they will be expected to produce results in the first year to support further funding.

Running a successful landlord accreditation scheme. Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme currently has 332 full landlord members, covering 14,850 bedspaces. This scheme compliments the UNIPOL, a charity that works to improve the standard of student homes, Code of Standards Scheme that has a further 20,634 bedspaces provided by 450 members.

The scheme includes initial sample checking of property and management standards as well as ongoing sample checking of landlords' portfolio and investigation of any complaints. There is a formal complaints procedure in place to ensure landlords maintain standards and compliance with the scheme. Ultimate sanctions, following an impartial review panel hearing, can lead to landlords having their membership suspended or withdrawn.

Providing in-depth training for landlords. The housing standards team have included a condition on both their HMO and selective licences that all licensed landlords must complete a mandatory training course that covers all aspects of property standards, management ability, and tenant relationships.

Distributing landlord advice. 'A good practice guide for landlords' is produced annually and distributed free of charge to landlords and agents in the city. It contains advice on their responsibilities and examples of good practice. The council also operates an extensive website, which includes a range of information: links to partner agencies, downloads, and contact information.

Working with local landlord groups. Leeds have a good relationship with the Residential Landlords Association (RLA) and the National Landlord Associations (NLA). Both organisations are regular attendees at strategy group meetings and help formulate policy and procedures. They hold regular forums and recently held a joint landlord conference in Leeds with UNIPOL and the RLA.

What does Leeds' rogue landlords team look like?

The council has 26 staff members working in its housing regulation service. This team covers all property standards work, including HMO licensing, a selective licensing area, and the Leeds Landlord Accreditation Scheme. All officers in the team undertake enforcement action against landlords.

In addition, they also have an area renewal team of 13 staff whose remit covers empty property work, home improvement loans, and capital programme works. Both teams incorporate a mix of experience and grades ranging from qualified environmental health officers, technical officers, and admin support.

Manchester City Council

Manchester is a large, metropolitan council in the North West of England. The city is bordered by the Pennines and sits within the wider metropolitan county of Greater Manchester. **There are roughly 58,000 private rented sector properties in Manchester (22 percent of properties overall). This has grown by 77 percent since 2001 according to the 2011 Census.**

What works for Manchester?

Triaging all complaints. All complaints are triaged by an officer to assess if the request is an emergency. If the complaint is an emergency (eg hot water problems or a serious hazard) then an officer from the neighbourhood delivery team arranges to inspect as a priority. Where the issue relates to fire hazards or is in relation to a larger HMO, the city-wide team responds. In non-emergency jobs the landlord is notified of the complaint and they are given 14 days to respond. If no action is taken during this fortnight then an inspection is carried out and enforcement action commenced.

Strong tenancy relations. Manchester have one Tenancy Relations Officer (TRO), who sits with the city-wide team. This officer works alongside the council's homeless advisers to provide housing advice and support to tenants at risk of eviction. The city-wide officers are due to receive training in tenancy advice so that the minor but persistent cases can get dealt with swiftly, leaving the TRO to work on the more serious cases.

Working alongside local universities. Manchester works very closely with the universities in dealing with housing issues. This includes working with Manchester Student Homes, the universities' accreditation scheme. Manchester has access to Manchester Student Homes' online database, allowing the council to feed back to the universities on any accredited landlord who is causing concern. This joint work assists in keeping the accreditation scheme to those who demonstrate appropriate standards for maintaining and managing properties.

Working with local landlord groups. The council also works very closely with the NLA and the RLA, consulting with them on a review of Manchester's HMO standards and streamlining their HMO licence application scheme. The council sends a representative to their local branch meetings. They also use their own databases to publicise the NLA landlords' forums.

Innovative HMO licensing. Manchester are currently undertaking a new system of HMO licensing. They are in the process of renewing all their HMO licences, which were handed out on a five-year basis when the legislation was first introduced. The council are inspecting all properties as they reapply. Those with no concerns are given another five-year licence. Those with issues of non-compliance or with other concerns such as Category I and Category II hazards are forced to amend the problem and are then only offered a three-year licence, so that the council can keep a closer eye on them. Both licences are offered at the same price, so there is a clear financial incentive for the good landlords.

What does Manchester's rogue landlords team look like?

The council has five generic neighbourhood delivery teams that cover a range of local issues, including low-level private sector complaints. These teams are made up of officers with experience in private rented sector management; street environment; highways and transport; leisure services; and food and health safety.

Certain housing functions have been retained by the city-wide housing support team, including HMO management, high-level complaints (particularly those relating to Category I hazards, in high-risk HMOs), and tenancy relations. The city-wide team works alongside the neighbourhood delivery teams, supporting them in responding to complaints and providing training and buddying schemes.

The city-wide team receives referrals from a range of different agencies. They have established a 'duty officer' role that is responsible for receiving all referrals, maintaining consistency for the other agencies.

Pendle Borough Council

Pendle is a district council in East Lancashire, the North West. The borough has a population of almost 100,000. Pendle has some large areas of open countryside as well as a number of towns and villages, such as Barnoldswick and Colne. **There are roughly 7,000 private rented sector properties in Pendle (18 percent of properties overall). This has grown by 108 percent since 2001 according to the 2011 Census.**

What works for Pendle?

Charging enforcement fees. Initially Pendle will send a formal letter to landlords, asking for specific improvements, or 'minor repairs', to be made within 30 days. If these improvements are not made within this time then a formal enforcement notice is immediately served. This includes an enforcement fee of £370. If the minor repairs are carried out, but the major repairs not followed through within 60 days, then formal enforcement procedures commence.

If the enforcement notice expires, and there is still a tenant in the property, then the council will carry out the work and prosecute the landlord. If the property is empty they will prosecute straight away.

Publicising successful prosecutions. The council works with the local press to publicise any successful prosecutions. They also engage with *Environmental Health News* in order to get their cases promoted nationally. Word of mouth has spread about the council's 'no nonsense' attitude and this ensures that, on the whole, enforcement notices, or the threat of enforcement, are taken very seriously.

Supporting good landlords and educating amateur landlords of their responsibilities. The council holds a landlord forum two to three times a year. Occasionally after a successful prosecution the landlord in question has come back to the council for help. They have accepted their crimes and asked the council to work with them on improving their conduct and their properties.

For example: one such case involved a new letting agent. The agent took on a large portfolio from one particularly negligent landlord and did not have the means to appropriately support their tenants. Despite numerous warnings, and several enforcement notices the letting agent did not up their game, and as a result the council successfully prosecuted them. Following this wake-up call the agent came to the council for help. They released the rogue landlord and are now extremely efficient at responding to complaints.

What frustrates Pendle?

Pendle's biggest frustration is that the fines handed down are small, meaning they do not act as a suitable deterrent. The Housing Act can be difficult to fully comprehend. However, all the members of Pendle's housing team are well versed in its intricacies, ensuring that a landlord never evades prosecution on a technicality.

Peterborough City Council

Peterborough is a unitary authority at the heart of the Cambridgeshire, Rutland, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire borders, the East of England. It is a cathedral city, which lies on the banks of the River Nene. **There are roughly 14,000 private rented sector properties in Peterborough (19 percent of properties overall). This has grown by 96 percent since 2001 according to the 2011 Census.**

What works for Peterborough?

Proactively inspecting problem areas. Peterborough City Council recognise that they have a problem with rogue landlords in their 'Operation Can Do' area. While they do not proactively inspect the whole local authority they currently have a team in place that are going around every single property in the area, checking for a wide range of issues including PRS conditions, energy efficiency, and tenant need. This team is multi-agency and was created following their access to 'Beds in Sheds' government funding.

Publicising prosecutions. As soon as a case is successful they file a 'publicity report' that is immediately sent to the communications team, who distribute it to the local media. They have a good relationship with their local media.

Robust tenant complaint procedures. These procedures ensure that reports are accurate and efficiently processed through the legal team. If they receive a complaint they immediately issue a 'tenant service request form'. One of the questions on this form is 'Have you contacted your landlord?' If the answer is 'no' Peterborough issue a template letter and instruct the complainant to do so. If no reply is received within 14 days the tenant is asked to contact the council again, with a copy of the sent letter attached. The council will then contact the landlord directly, ordering them to make the adjustments within a given timescale. If no adjustments are made they visit the property and serve notice, which is always pursued to the fullest extent.

Working closely with other agencies. The team are located on the same floor as the police and the fire service, and they share a customer service desk with the police. Their 'Can Do' strategy is a 10-year, multi-agency strategy. Inspections are carried out alongside the police and occasionally the UKBA.

How are Peterborough prosecuting rogue landlords?

In the last four years Peterborough have made 28 successful prosecutions:

- nine for non-compliance with improvement notices relating to category I and category II hazards
- two for the lack of a HMO licence
- 14 for the lack of a HMO licence in an additional licensing area
- 16 for improper supply of information.

They use the existing legislation to the fullest extent when vigorously pursuing landlords. They have a very low tolerance of landlords who do not respond to repair requests.

For more information, or for information on signing up to Shelter's Evict Rogue Landlords campaign, please contact Martha Mackenzie at martha_mackenzie@shelter.org.uk or 0344 515 2274.

We are always interested in the positive work being undertaken by councils across England. If you have examples of emerging good practice please share them with us, using the contact details above.

For detailed information on the campaign and its recent successes visit Shelter's campaign web pages: shelter.org.uk/campaigns

For information on tenant support and advice visit Shelter's housing advice pages: shelter.org.uk/advice

We help over a million people a year struggling with bad housing or homelessness – and we campaign to prevent it in the first place.

We're here so no one has to fight bad housing or homelessness on their own.

Please support us at shelter.org.uk

Until there's a home for everyone

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