

Housing Plus

Homefinder Scheme

What we did

Developed the Ashford Homefinder Scheme which is a scheme designed to provide households who are homeless or threatened with homelessness, with the maximum opportunity of securing and sustaining private rented sector accommodation. The scheme has introduced more options, included pre approvals for bonds, the option of a cash deposit, combining pre tenancy training whilst ensuring adequate support assessments have taken place. In addition we have introduced a new application form for our bond scheme and have created a moving in pack, we have also developed a landlords guide and have commenced tenancy health checks.

How we did it

Consultants, Inside Housing Solutions, were commissioned to review the policy and practice around our Homeless Prevention Bond Scheme. The review highlighted the areas that were working well but also showed there were some areas that could be improved.

Who was involved?

Inside Housing Solutions carried out the research and put together a draft of how the new scheme would work. Consultation took place with the landlord business club and with a selection of local lettings agents. The final proposal was then presented to the Housing Options Officers and the Landlord Liaison Officers, who had the opportunity to feedback on the workability of the scheme. Some amendments were made and a second consultation session was arranged.

Resources

The Lead Officer for this initiative was the Senior Housing Options Officer who was assisted by the two Landlord Liaison Officers and the wider Housing Options team.



Time taken

This project took three months from conception, review and consultation through to the launch of the scheme. There will be a continual ongoing liaison with the private sector via our business club and the Ashford Landlord Forum. A review of the new practices will take place 6 months after implementation to identify what is working well and what needs further development.

Lessons learned

Consultation with staff was vital to gain staff buy in as was a pre launch training session and comprehensive procedural notes.

It is also important to identify what resources are there to support the implementation of the scheme.

Taking a step back and identifying what the barriers are for customers accessing the private rented sector and working closely with private landlords and letting agents to understand their perspective

Cost

The staff structure was already in place to provide Landlord Liaison Officers. The funding enabled the use of Inside Housing Solutions to conduct a full review and to make recommendations.

The actual cost was £12,500 which also incorporates the cost of a landlord database which has been developed internally and which will be launched imminently.

Additional Information

The scheme was launched on 1st April and is proving to be very successful. It offers much more than just a deposit bond, allowing us to negotiate with landlords and agents.

For more information email: Housingplus@ashford.gov.uk