

Inside Housing Solutions



Local Lettings Agency

Project to Research & Develop a Service

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Introduction

IHS are known for our innovative approach to private sector housing access schemes, focusing on the importance of working with private landlords, using and developing organisations' unique selling points to create sustainable, exciting and innovative Client focused schemes within tight resources.

IHS are currently working with a number of organisations across the UK researching viability, developing and launching Local Lettings Agencies (LLAs) and other private sector housing access projects. This includes developing marketing strategies, bespoke databases for managing Lettings Schemes, as well as all the necessary paperwork, documents and procedures associated with these projects.

Our Approach

Our team, led by Mike Rangecroft are hugely knowledgeable on all private rented sector matters and have an engaging style that Clients respond to positively. Mike developed and delivered the Crisis / DCLG private sector access scheme national training programme, a new session on working with the LHA changes and private sector access schemes, and has a deep knowledge and an innovative approach to how these schemes can be developed.

This overview outlines the work required to develop a Local Lettings Service in order to achieve the following aims;

- Research the need and scope for a LLA in your area
- Enhance and develop easy, open access to good quality non-social housing
- Create a mechanism by which Local Authorities can access the wider housing market within existing resources
- Support within the private rented market for Landlords, Agents and potential Tenants
- Develop a realistic and sustainable strategy to discharge of housing duty into the private sector

In order to achieve these aims, most organisations will need to research, develop and implement a range of services, expanding on their current private sector access model. These services will be designed to maximize use of the private rented market, ensuring good relationships with Landlords and therefore putting the organisation in a position where they are less reliant on public sector funding and more able to generate a revenue, leading to a sustainable business model.

The project that we would undertake for you will investigate the extent to which this service is required (i.e. how it could fit into the local market), gathering information about Landlords interested in a service, what issues exist that will influence the development and delivery of such a service and recommendations regarding models, finance, timescales and critical factors.

The work listed in this overview is by no means a comprehensive list of the tasks we would undertake to complete the project, but is an overview for guidance. We will prepare a specific bespoke proposal for organisations upon request.

Suggested Timescale

In our experience, phase 1 of this project can be completed within 10 weeks from start date. Guide:

Week 1:	Initial meeting & study outline
Week 2:	Research and consultation section commences
Week 4:	Review and analysis section commences
Week 6:	Progress meeting with organisation
Week 8:	Develop recommendations and final report, including detailed financial modeling for the recommended option
Week 9:	Draft report delivered to organisation
Week 10:	Meeting with organisation & presentations as required

Project Methodology

Research and Consultation (Phase 1)

- Undertake review of local existing private sector access schemes, including leasing schemes and schemes run by other organisations
- Detailed analysis of your current schemes in particular, including finances and resources used, properties procured, tenancies created, support provided, sustainability of tenancies, reasons for failure of tenancies, claims made, rent arrears situation and underlying trends affecting these issues
- Meetings / consultation with relevant staff from your organisation and partner organisations
- Individual meetings / consultation with selected group of local Landlords and Letting Agents
- Analysis of local High Street Letting Agents services and charges, including a mystery shopping exercise
- Identify sources of accommodation and accommodation types not previously identified and/or used, including developing a strategy to engage with those owners and procure this accommodation. This is likely to require different strategies for differing property types

Analysis of available data, skills and resources (Phase 1)

- Analysis of your current 'back office' infrastructure to assess 'fitness for purpose' in terms of developing a more innovative and broader Local Letting Service
- Analysis of your staffing skillset and resources available
- Analyse how improved services could be developed within existing resources
- Provide formal feedback on findings incorporating all of the above and the market research elements

Recommendations and Financial Modeling (Phase 1)

- Using our experience of known and unknown costs, (from our ongoing work with other LLAs), we will develop recommendations for all aspects of a chargeable Local Lettings Service, to include, Landlord incentives (bond, direct payments etc.), how to enhance professionalism of scheme, marketing of scheme, communication channels, referencing of clients and how to address critical failure factors identified

- Develop recommendations for all aspects of a comprehensive Local Lettings Service for Tenants, to include, services for improving financial stability and education, training and employment opportunities
- Develop recommendations for pre-tenancy protocols, including, interviewing and referencing of tenants, accreditation and assessment
- Develop financial model for recommended option, to include all likely expenditure and income for years 1 – 3
- Develop clear financial options that ensure self-sustainability of scheme and a time frame to reach this point

Report and Presentations (Phase 1)

- Present formal report outlining all aspects of project, with dedicated sections to conclusions, recommendations and financial modeling
- Undertake presentation to Senior Officers and / or Board Members as required

Implementation and Launch of new Service (Phase 2)

Following phase 1, should you wish to proceed with the implementation and launch of the Local Lettings Service, we would be happy to assist you with this work. Below are some of the key pieces of work that may be required (clearly this may change in light of the results of phase 1, but as a guide):

- Attend face to face meetings as required with you to assist you and help finalise decisions on options arising out of phase 1 work, including decisions on Local Letting Service fees, services to be provided, how these will be delivered, marketing and launch of Scheme.
- An important element of this Local Letting Service will be to develop a realistic and relevant tenant referencing element, incorporating aspects that you are able to reference for your clients and avoiding a traditional Letting Agents approach to referencing. We would develop a bespoke tenant referencing element to your Service
- Develop new paperwork and documentation as required for the Local Lettings Service, including procedures, documents, agreements and any paperwork that the Service may require in order to operate
- In partnership with you, finalise risk assessment of areas of financial exposure and concern for the Service, developing recommendations to minimise these areas and reduce the reliance on public sector funding
- In partnership with you, finalise risk assessment of areas of financial opportunity and the consequences for the Service, developing options and allowing you to make decisions on maximising these areas
- Set up referral systems and procedures for enhanced housing services for tenants (including the financial stability and education, training and employment options)
- Advise you on the marketing of the Service, including recommendations re: literature, publicity and launch
- Undertake presentation / hosting at the launch event as required
- Design a bespoke training day for all staff and other persons as you see fit who are involved in the Service and deliver that training at your offices
- Develop a staff handbook, a guide to the Service for staff
- For the first 3 months after launch provide an email back up service for staff who require assistance or guidance on operational issues

This document provides an outline of how we could proceed in working with you. All our work is designed bespoke for you, as no two organisations are the same. We are committed to providing you with a candid approach and sustainable way forward. Ask us and we will give you a list of references if you want to speak to anyone who has used us previously.