

Private Sector and Housing Standards

About the Service

The Private Sector and Housing Standards Service protects the health, safety and welfare of residents living in private rented properties and those near empty homes across Sandwell. We deliver a comprehensive statutory enforcement and regulatory programme to improve housing standards, prevent homelessness, and support a fair and well-managed private rented sector.

We are responsible for:

- Enforcement of housing standards under the Housing Act 2004 and related legislation.
- Inspection and licensing of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).
- Enforcement of disrepair causing a nuisance between adjoining private residential properties.
- Delivery of the Secure & Sustain (S&S) scheme to source, vet and match properties and tenants, and manage tenancies to reduce homelessness.
- Investigation and prosecution of illegal eviction and landlord harassment under the Protection from Eviction Act 1977.
- Bringing empty homes back into use.
- Income generation through civil penalties, licensing and cost recovery.
- Advice, engagement and training for landlords and agents to raise standards.

Through the Secure & Sustain (S&S) scheme, we work with private landlords to provide safe, affordable homes for households moving on from temporary accommodation. Our team sources, vets and matches suitable properties and tenants, manages tenancy set-up and monitoring, and ensures rent and property standards are maintained. Each placement is supported for 12 months under Council management to ensure it is sustainable and successful. After that period, in most cases, management reverts fully to the landlord.

We are committed to:

Ensuring all private rented properties meet legal standards for safety, condition and management.

Licensing and monitoring all mandatory and additional HMOs, ensuring licence conditions are met.

Ensuring privately owned residential properties do not impact on neighbouring lands due to disrepair.

Investigating housing complaints, disrepair or landlord malpractice quickly and fairly.

Protecting tenants from illegal eviction and landlord harassment.

Supporting landlords through clear written guidance and advice.

Bringing empty homes back into use to increase housing supply.

Sourcing good quality private rental accommodation to place families and individuals facing homelessness.

Managing Secure & Sustain placements for 12 months to ensure stable tenancies before returning management to landlords. Supporting tenants to become financially independent and able to manage their tenancies.

Using civil penalties and, where necessary, prosecution to tackle serious or repeated non-compliance relating to disrepair and HMO licensing and regulations breaches.

To meet our commitments, we will:

Carry out inspections and investigations within statutory and local timescales.

Take fair, proportionate enforcement action in line with national guidance and the Council's **Enforcement Policy**.

Provide clear written feedback following all inspections and visits.

Offer landlords advice around licensing requirements and legal responsibilities.

Manage Secure & Sustain placements end-to-end, including property sourcing, tenancy management, rent oversight, and a 12-month sustainment programme.

Work collaboratively with Housing Solutions, Environmental Enforcement, and Legal Services to protect residents.

Maintain up-to-date policies and procedures authored by the service, including the *Illegal Eviction Policy 2024* and *Secure & Sustain Process Suite*.

Monitor performance, income, and case outcomes monthly through the Directorate's governance framework.

We ask you to:

Provide accurate information about properties and respond promptly to contact from the service.

Engage with your landlord and allow them fair access to complete works.

Allow lawful access for inspection and investigation by Sandwell Council.

Work with us to resolve issues voluntarily wherever possible.

Notify us of any change of ownership/tenancy or management arrangements.

Treat our officers with respect.

To measure and improve our service we will:

Review performance against key indicators each quarter.

Record and monitor response times, enforcement outcomes, and case resolution rates.

Gather feedback from landlords and tenants to identify learning.

Review all service policies annually to reflect current legislation and good practice.

Report performance through the Council's Housing and Place Directorate management framework.

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