

Western Isles Forum of Tenant and Resident's Associations

2011

# HHP Letting Standard



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# **HHP Letting Standard**

## **Contents –**

**Background**

**Method summary**

**Results Data**

**Conclusion**

**Further information**

# Background

As part of their continuing commitment to improving the quality of housing in the isles, Hebridean Housing Partnership have set out on a multi million pound investment programme on their existing stock. However concerns have been raised about the letting standard of some of their older properties, especially those in easy to let areas.

## Method Summary

This report is WIFTRA's response to the increasing concern about the letting standard of HHP's properties and whether this has been compromised by the high demand for properties in the Broad Bay / Stornoway area. The replies received to the survey were sorted into areas and were targeted at new tenants (non transfer) the small number of returns is probably due to the low turnover in these properties and the discounting of newly let properties less than three years old.

The preparation for a survey of this type was to set up questionnaires which would be available to download, complete online and by post and email. A total of 20 postal forms were sent out to "new" HHP tenants asking for their thoughts and experiences of the letting system and the letting standard.

The returns were slightly disappointing (45%) but not inconsistent with this type of survey. The evidence base was self-contained and the survey totally blind with no addresses being logged.

Of the 9 returns all forms had all questions answered.

# Results Data:

- **Question 1- What was your status before you were offered the tenancy?**
- **Homeless**
- **Private Renting**
- **Homeowner**
- **With Family/Friends.**
- **Other**

Not unexpectedly the majority (6) answered homeless to this question; this shows the high ratio of homeless allocations within this area.

## **Question 2 – Did you view the property before allocation?**

- **Yes**
- **No**
- **We wanted to but had no opportunity.**

Most responses said they wanted to but had no opportunity (5); yes (2) and no (2). This is possibly due to the homeless allocations and the necessity to quickly turn over properties. Empty properties do not generate income!

- **Question 3 – Were you given your choice of area?**
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Comment**

It is gratifying to see that most (7) were given an allocation within their choice of area. The comment section was answered by one who stated "I wanted Stornoway I got Stornoway but would have liked a different bit."

- **Question 4 – Did you accept your first choice and if not why?**
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Why Not.**

The highest answer (6) was no with four giving reasons:

"The house was too far from my family."

"The house was not suitable."

"The house was not in the area I wanted"

"I did not like the heating system."

- **Question 5 – Thinking of your first impression of the house would you say the condition was acceptable and if not why?**
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Why not**

This question was aimed at finding out the clients' first impression upon seeing the property. Yes (3) was quite encouraging as it represents a third of clients being happy with the property upon first sight, however two thirds were not with the reasons given being mostly decorative or tidiness problems:

Dirty – four of the six said the property was dirty with one using the word disgusting and smelly.

Shabby – was the word used by two.

Badly finished off was another often used phrase (5).

Anecdotally the most interesting comments were:

"The kitchen had two different types of cupboard doors where they had been replaced."

"The floor was covered in sawdust and bits of plaster."

"I could not see out of the windows and the kitchen was filthy."

- **Question 6 – Thinking of the decorative standard would you say the property was acceptable?**
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Why Not.**

This seems to be the main bone of contention with all (9) saying no, with some offering pithy reasons.

"The wallpaper had been pulled off by the workmen for no apparent reason."

"Plaster had been left to harden on the door frames and skirting which meant the paint chipped when we tried to get it off. Bloody thoughtless as a wipe with a damp rag would have sorted it."

"The doors had been left with holes in and the kitchen sink was full of bits of plaster."

"Bloody (expletive rather than descriptive I hope) footprints all over the bath causing scratches why can't they put covers on them?"

- **Question 7 – Would you say the decoration allowance (if you received it) was adequate?**
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Why Not**

Again all of those asked did not think the decoration allowance was enough. With reasons including:

“It would cover the basics of paint but not allow any real decoration to make it homely, like nice wallpaper.”

“Totally inadequate needs to be doubled just to put right the faults HHP leave.”

“I found that I could not afford to decorate and so risked missing out on the allowance.”

- **Question 8 – What would you prefer a higher decorating allowance or the property decorated in neutral colours throughout?**
- **Higher Allowance**
- **Decorated Throughout**
- **Comment**

It was surprising at first that the majority (5) went for the decoration throughout but this became clearer as the comment thread was followed:

“I would like to see it decorated then HHP would have to tidy first.”

“Decorated, absolutely a fresh clean house to move into.”

“Give us enough money to make our homes decent for our kids we pay enough in rent.”

“I wanted a clean safe place for my family I got a hovel decorate them please.”

- **Question 9 – Thinking of your home now are you happy with the standard it is at now.?**
- **Yes**
- **No**
- **Comment**

All of the respondents were happy with their home now.

- **Question 10 – How long have you lived in your home now?**
- **Less than a month**
- **Two to six Months**
- **Six Months to a year**

The survey was sent to people who had been allocated houses in the past year.

Less than a month (0)

Two to six months (3)

Six months to a year (6)

This shows that it that as all were now happy that it takes two months to a year to get the property how they want it, which would probably be the same across all tenures.

## Conclusion:

In conclusion the main issues flagged up in this report are to do with cosmetic rather than structural or repair issues. The caveat of this report is the small sample size and to get a real feel for the issues a survey of all new tenants would need to be carried out.

- The decorating allowance may need to be reappraised.
- The change of tenancy works may need to be checked more thoroughly.
- A more rigid regime of workplace tidiness may need to be introduced into the contractors' code of conduct.
- The range of products covered by the decorating allowance must reflect what is available to the client.
- The change of tenancy works must include a more flexible approach to worktop/ tile / kitchen door replacement to provide as close a match as possible or even replacing all as the same.

## Further Information

Further copies of this report or a large print version can be obtained from the forum. All information and text are for public use but please credit the author when citing or quoting from this report.

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## About WIFTRA.org:

Wiftra are the umbrella organisation covering all of the tenant and resident's groups within the Western Isles. We are part of the Regional Network and feed into national and UK wide organisations. We have prepared reports for many organisations including Hebridean Housing Partnership and the Scottish Government.

Want to know more go to:

<http://www.wiftra.org> or contact [Kevin@wiftra.org](mailto:Kevin@wiftra.org).