

# INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
HOUSING SERVICES MANAGER	ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING COMMITTEE	24 JANUARY 2023	15
<b>HMO INSPECTION PROGRAMME</b>			

**PUBLIC ITEM**

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

**SUMMARY OF INFORMATION**

This report provides an update on the approved inspection programme on houses of multiple occupancy over a 2.5-year period

The programme commenced on the 14<sup>th</sup> of March 2022 and the programme originally ran on a 5-week rotation with inspections taking place once every fourth week.

A review of the programme concluded that the rotation should increase to 4-weeks with inspections taking place over two days during the second week

There have been 143 properties inspected, many properties have been visited more than once due to notices being served and progress inspections being conducted.

**SOURCE OF INFORMATION**

Internal Housing Services operation

**LINK TO INFORMATION**

[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

[Document.ashx \(cmis.uk.com\)](#)

**WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?**

Committee approved the programme in August 2021, and it has been running successfully since March 2022. The information is to provide an update of the work completed to date.

**FURTHER INFORMATION**

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## REPORT

### Overview of the delivery of HMO inspection programme

1. The Housing Service is delivering a project to proactively inspect HMO's. The project runs alongside existing reactive work. The project was estimated to run for a period of 2.5 years and will be reviewed at the end of two years in March 2024.
  - a. Week 1 Decide on the area for door to door and send letters / emails to LL, agents, and attending agencies (Appendix 3)
  - b. Week 2 Door to door, establish their residential status and need for HHSRS survey and fire safety interventions
  - c. Week 3 Send section 239s to properties that were highlighted as needing further intervention for week 4 inspections
  - d. Week 4 Conduct HHSRS inspections
  - e. Week 5 All notices must be finalised and served, Multi-agency meeting to discuss progress of previous months notices and safeguarding cases.
2. To run the programme and achieve maximum productivity the introduction of a new computer system was required. The system has provided officers with the ability to produce documents and notices quickly and without human error as all documentation and notices are pre-loaded with the added security that the system will not allow the user to progress unless certain tasks have been completed. The computer system has proven to be a more efficient process and has been essential to the programme.
3. When carrying out an HHSRS inspection officers are looking for total of 29 hazards. These hazards are not always visible, damp is not always obvious, equipment purchased with the funding has enabled officers to carry out their inspections in full. Damp meters, socket testers and volt readers have enabled officers to make confident decisions when scoring the health and safety of tenants and properties during the HHSRS reporting process.
4. Multi-agency working has been fundamental to the programme. The relationship between Private rental sector enforcement and Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) has been an excellent example of how agencies can work together to achieve the required outcomes. Regular meetings with LFRS give us the opportunity to discuss which service should serve notice on properties/Landlords depending on the offence being committed and which legislation is better fitted to resolve it.

### Progress of the HMO Programme since 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Number of inspections	Number of informal notices served to review and monitor	Number of Enforcement notices served	Number of Progress inspections	Number of cases closed due to works completed
211	130	6	49	28

5. The progress inspections have been challenging and gaining access to property is one the main issues faced by officers. Often posted or verbal appointments are made with tenants and landlords but are not kept.

Although the progress inspections appear low the reality is that officers can attend properties multiple times before gaining full access. In addition, officer absence has impacted the service leaving only one technical officer continuing with the pro-active and re-active inspections. To overcome these two housing services officers have qualified in the HHSRS and going forward these officers will assist technical officers with progress inspections which will alleviate the challenges faced so far. It is expected that over the next twelve months we will be able to increase progress.

6. The severity of hazards vary with each individual inspection. Following are a couple of scenarios that demonstrate the importance of that inspection being proactively completed under the HMO Inspection programme.
  - a. Scenario 1: Joint visit with LFRS. On entering the property the stair well was full of household items and blocked. This hindered the means of escape for the five flats above. In addition the fire panel was not operating. This would normally have been an Emergency Prohibition Order (EPO). Through joint working we were able to contact the Landlord and have all the items removed clearing the means of escape and the Fire Safety Engineer repair the fire panel on the same day. The notice served was a Hazard Awareness Notice and not a EPO.
  - b. Scenario 2: Inspection underway and tenant reported having received a Section 21 notice. Tenant did not understand the bidding process for MyHomeChoice or how to be awarded priority due to current circumstances. The Housing Services Role connected to the project was able to provide advice and assistance and within a period of 4 weeks she was able to move into social housing.

END OF REPORT