

**SPECIFICATION FOR AT1087 Approved Agency & Landlord List for Temporary Accommodation**

**Introduction**

Luton is a large and growing town around 30 miles to the north of London. Luton Council is a unitary Council covering an area of approximately 16.74 square miles (43.35 km2) and the current population of Luton is estimated at 216,000.

The Council employs approximately 3,000 people based in a variety of locations such as offices, schools, nurseries, crematorium, parks pavilions, community centres, sports centres, day care, residential, police station, hospital, etc. These locations are located across the Borough.

Temporary Accommodation are reaching out to Agents for a range of self-contained properties to offer suitable accommodation for singles and families ranging from 1 to 5 beds, for homeless applicants. We are averaging 340 new homeless approaches monthly and we do not have the accommodation to offer.

This is resulting in us block booking expensive hotel accommodation, which is not suitable accommodation long term.

By obtaining more self-contained properties we can reduce our overall cost of accommodation as this is more cost effective and value for money.

In accordance with legislation and guidance, the Council will seek to accommodate homeless households within Luton as far as is reasonably practicable and will consider the suitability of any temporary accommodation offered. However, due to the limited availability of temporary accommodation and applicants circumstances, it is sometimes necessary to place households outside of our district as it would not be reasonably practicable to accommodate them within it.

**Section1: Background & Context**

By obtaining more self-contained properties, we will be offering homelessness suitable accommodation, which is a statutory requirement. The Homelessness Act outlines our statutory responsibility to home all homelessness applicants with a priority need. Our housing responsibilities support homelessness, rough sleeping, those fleeing DV, (domestic violence), and those with mobility or mental health issues whom would not necessarily be able to secure their own accommodation. In addition, we have an obligation to accommodate those emergency homeless on the day households, vacating due to disrepair, fire or flooding. If we are unable to obtain properties we can cannot fulfil our statutory duty and this would have a negative impact on other services such as Social (Adult and Children) and Mental Health services which supports our residents.

Securing longer-term accommodation, as above, is for households where the Council has accepted full duty. This accommodation is provided until a suitable offer to discharge that duty can be made. This is provided through Agents on 3 year lease arrangements.

We must ensure we meet our legal obligations and adopt best practice.

This strategy complies with the relevant legislation and case law;

• The Housing Act 1996, as amended by the Homelessness Act 2002 and the Homelessness

 Reduction Act 2017

• The Localism Act 2011

• Homelessness (Suitability of Accommodation) (England) orders 1996, 2003 and 2012

• Equality Act 2010

• Children Act 2004 and R (G) v London Borough of Southwark (2009)

• R (on the application of Carstens) v Basildon DC [2007]

• Kensington and Chelsea LBC, ex p Kujtim [1999]

• Nzolameso v City of Westminster (2015)

**Section 2: Service Requirement**

The Council’s temporary accommodation portfolio comprises a range of provision - leasing arrangements with Registered Providers and private landlords, spot-purchased ‘nightly paid’ accommodation from Bed & Breakfasts (B&B’s), and units which have been identified within the Council’s own stock.

However, a key component in securing the temporary accommodation and Placement Strategy is that accommodation will be sourced from accredited Agents in the private sector. The Council operates a well-established Private Sector Leasing Scheme (PSL) that offers flexibility in terms of location and is used when the Council needs a specific type of property (adapted), which it cannot identify within its own stock.

Further specific requirements will be the standard of properties and adaptions required.

Each of the properties will be surveyed to ensure they meet the Decent Homes Standard and carry with them the following mandatory property certificates;

EICR

CP12 – Gas Safety

EPC – minimum D rating

CO2 monitors

Smoke detectors

The stakeholders we are looking to attract, are those accredited to the property ombudsman, ARLA and or Property Mark. Working with these Agents offers assurances that they will work within the lettings guidelines.

We will require the ability to attract new Agents throughout the year, especially for the out of borough procurement for homeless applicants unable to reside in Luton.

**Section 3: Budget/Spend Information**

The overall benefit cap for non-working households (of circa £20,000 for families) makes it harder for the Council to find affordable private rented accommodation for non-working households. The impact of Universal Credit (UC) has also been felt with private landlords being unwilling to take on households claiming UC without additional guarantees or incentives.

We currently have 107 households in B&B costing circa £320,000 per month. To secure 107 x 3 bedroom properties would cost circa £139,000 per month.

**Section 4: Performance Measures**

Temporary accommodation demand needs to be reviewed with some regularity. A variety of factors can positively or negatively impact on temporary accommodation requirements including, but not limited to, the Covid 19 global pandemic which gave rise to a public health emergency, changes in Government legislation (the significant impact of the Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 is a case in point), the current economic environment (e.g. Brexit and mortgage rate increases), and the current housing market, ESPECIALLY a reduction in private sector lettings and growth in sales.

Limited stock should not pressure us to accepting substandard properties which will not achieve market rents due to their condition. Our surveys will continue to be streamlined and demand the delivery of good quality accommodation.

To try and avoid the prevalent rise in disrepair claims mainly due to damp and condensation we are also insisting on the following;

* Extractors in bathrooms and kitchens
* Inspections of external guttering
* Minimum D rating on EPC

**Section 5: Timescales**

The Approved Agency Landlord List will be accessible for existing and new agents to join throughout the year, to accommodate our temporary accommodation demand.

Three year leases will be offered, subject to the passed survey sign off and all mandatory property certificates. Agents need to deliver properties on time with assurances of their 24/7 repair contractors, to ensure our tenants have support and repairs are addressed in a timely manner.

**Section 6: Appendices**

N/A