

FRAUD, CORRUPTION AND FINANCIAL IRREGULARITIES – RESULTS OF CASES CLOSED 2019/20

Offence/irregularity, sanctions and redress	Key outstanding actions
<p>1. (0029) Suspected Subletting: Anonymous referral that the tenant was not residing at the address but was allowing someone else to reside there. Tenant interviewed and denied any offence, but the evidence suggested otherwise. Case prepared for prosecution, but case delayed as tenant claimed to have been hospitalised whilst overseas and was granted time to submit a defence. Case eventually heard and possession was awarded. However, due to lapse of time and lost contact with sub-tenants unable to progress any further action under POSHFA.</p>	None
<p>2. (2324) Suspected Subletting: Anonymous referral that the tenant was not residing at the address but was allowing someone else to reside there. Investigation confirmed that a male, not the tenant, was in residence. They initially claimed to be only staying temporarily and that the tenant was staying with her girlfriend. Further follow-up visits revealed the same male was still in residence. As a result of the investigation, notices were served, and the tenant returned the keys. Insufficient evidence to progress any further action under POSHFA.</p>	None
<p>3. (3096) Suspected Abandonment: Referral from SHP as property appeared abandoned and neighbours had not seen the tenant for over a year. System checks showed that the tenant was in receipt of benefits but had made no contact and utilities usage was extremely low. Several unannounced visits were conducted but no access was gained as nobody was home. Evidence gathered was sufficient to support the issue of notices which were not responded to. Case passed to SLLP for recovery action and following Court Hearing possession awarded and property recovered.</p>	None
<p>4. (3142) Suspected Subletting: Anonymous referral and linked with anti-social behaviour concern over the use of drugs, that the tenant was allowing other to reside in the property. Visits to the property revealed others in residence who claimed to be the tenant’s nephews, but tenant was not present. Notices were issued but no contact was received from the tenant. Additional investigation identified an alternative address for the tenant who was contacted by SWLFP, keys returned.</p>	None
<p>5. (4044) Suspected False Succession Claim: Tenant’s daughters applied to succeed to the tenancy, but officers were unsure they met the eligibility criteria. System Check identified that neither daughter had registered links to the address. One applicant was liable for Council Tax at an alternative address and it was not clear as to whether the second had leave to remain in the UK. Evidence provided and succession was denied. As applicants refused to vacate the property, legal action taken and possession order awarded by the Court, property recovered.</p>	None
Offence/irregularity, sanctions and redress	Key outstanding actions

6. (4114) Suspected False Succession Claim: Referred by SHP as the tenant passed away and SHP were not notified. Information eventually received from Council Tax Team. Tenant's son sought succession, but investigation highlighted that they had provided contradictory information over how long they had been in residence at the property, therefore no eligible for succession. Further checks on the son revealed links to a different address and no links to the tenancy address. Referred to legal and, following a Court hearing, an eviction was carried out and possession recovered.	None
7. (4918) Suspected Subletting: Anonymous referral stating that the family had moved to Poland and others were residing at the property. Investigations revealed intelligence that one of the joint tenants was in Poland with their children and the other had moved out of the property some years before. Visits to the property yielded no response, no evidence of sub-tenants. Notices were issued and one of the joint tenants made contact. A visit was conducted, and the property did not appear lived in. Notices expired and the tenant eventually returned the keys.	None
8. (5165) Suspected Subletting: Anonymous referral alleging the tenant had moved out and was allowing his adult son to reside at the property. Checks conducted showed that the tenant had not been linked to the address since 2014. Information passed to housing provider who managed to contact the tenant who confirmed he was residing in Great Yarmouth and wanted to give the property back. Notices were served to both addresses and locks changed on expiry of notices.	None
9. (5211) Suspected Abandonment: Referred by Clarion as the tenant was suspected to be residing elsewhere. Checks indicated that the property was empty, and information obtained that the tenant now lived at an alternative address in Devon. Notices were served and a lock change carried out on expiry of the notices.	None
10. (5230) Suspected Abandonment: Referral by SHP as there are large arrears on the rent account and the tenant could not be contacted. Checks showed that the property was not being lived in and that the tenant had been included in his girlfriend's housing application from another address. Notices were issued and property recovered.	None
11. (5504) Suspected Abandonment: Referral received from Clarion following a report from a neighbour that the property had been empty since before Christmas and that the tenant had gone abroad. Checks showed that the tenant had flown abroad with no indication of having returned to the UK. Utilities information also supported the claim that the property was empty. Notices served and following Court hearing property recovered.	None
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<p>12. (5658) Suspected False Succession Claim: Application was received from a male claiming to be the tenant's carer. System checks showed no record of another occupant on the property and a credit check showed that the applicant had no link to the property or to the tenant. Succession was denied and notices served on the property. The occupant vacated prior to the expiry of the notices.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>13. (5855) Suspected Abandonment: Anonymous referral claiming the tenant was no longer resident. System checks highlighted that the tenant now lived in a care home. Next of Kin located and contacted confirming the tenant now resided in a care home and possession was surrendered.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Right to Buy: 14. Since 01/04/19 the SWLFP have reviewed 21 applications. Priority is given to applications where the tenants are receiving Housing Benefit. Home visits are arranged to confirm funding source for purchase, at which point some applicants withdraw their application. After an offer is made the applicants are requested to provide evidence of the financing. Following intervention, including visits, 17 referrals have been closed with no further action required and 4 referrals have been closed with the applicants withdrawing their application (3681, 4458, 4870, 5857).</p>	<p>The SWLFP continues to review right to buy applications referred and carry out visits or interviews with applicants to help validate their application.</p>
<p>Council Tax Reduction 15. (4755) CTR, Undisclosed Earnings: Referral received from Benefits service following that claimants had not declared changes to their income and a large HB overpayment had been created. Couple interviewed and claimants partner admitted that the form had been filled in incorrectly, but this was an omission rather than intent. Caution given and overpayment of £1,740.33 created on CTR claim.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Permit Fraud 16. Joint Working with Sutton's Parking Team: Five one off blue badge misuse cases have been referred by Parking Services for follow up. Three cases to date have resulted in successful guilty verdicts. In addition, joint work undertaken on investigations of persons suspected of providing falsified evidence in order to avoid paying a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN). Two cases resulted in the issue of a formal caution; two cases led to warnings while three further cases are being prepared for prosecution. There are also two other cases being actively investigated.</p>	<p>Continue to support in-house parking services with one-off spot checks and investigations into suspected cases of the provision of falsified evidence to avoid PCN charges.</p>
<p>Offence/irregularity, sanctions and redress</p>	<p>Key outstanding actions</p>
<p>17. (5128) Suspected Fraudulent PCN appeal: Referred by in-house parking team as they had received a call from a gentleman who claimed he had been issued with a PCN in error and had, in fact, been displaying his blue badge. Investigation revealed that he had photoshopped a picture of</p>	<p>None</p>

<p>a blue badge in order to appeal the ticket. Customer interviewed and admitted offence. Caution Issued which will be held on file in case of future offences.</p>	
<p>18. (5353) Suspected Fraudulent PCN appeal: Referred by in-house parking team as they suspected that fraudulent documents had been submitted as part of a PCN appeal. A RAC rescue documents had been submitted but investigation confirmed that the reference numbers did not match anything on the RAC systems. Customer interviewed and admitted offence. Caution Issued which will be held on file in case of future offences.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>School Admissions: 19. (6059) Suspected False Schools Admission Application: Referral from Schools Admissions Team suspecting that Guardian was using a false address to support an application that would increase their chance of admission to their preferred school. System checks and property visit confirmed that the claimed residence address was empty, and family had links to another address. Application declined.</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>20. (6177) Suspected False Schools Admission Application: Referral from Schools Admissions Team suspecting that Guardian was using a false address to support an application that would increase their chance of admission to their preferred school. System checks and property visit confirmed that the claimed residence was a recently rented property, and family was traced to an address in a neighbouring authority. Application declined.</p>	<p>None</p>

Glossary

CTR	Council Tax Reduction	PCN	Penalty Charge Notice
POSHFA	Prevention of Social Housing Fraud Act	RAC	Royal Automobile Club
SHP	Sutton Housing Partnership	SLLP	South London Legal Partnership
SWLFP	South West London Fraud Partnership		