



## Preventing Tenancy Fraud

# Eliminate subletting of social housing

### Project Brief

The London Borough of Brent has an ever increasing population and is close to Central London. These two factors place extreme pressures on its local housing stock. Tenancy applications exceed the number of properties available and the close proximity to central London makes illegal subletting a temptation that some cannot resist. Outdated tenancy agreements and IT systems were incapable of detecting illegal subletting which inevitably increased the demand on the remaining pool of available housing stock, consequently delaying genuine applications and driving up costs.

Following a statutory period of consultation with 10,000 residents lasting several months, Brent Housing Partnership (BHP) worked with TSSI to introduce a new type of Tenancy Agreement that contained the tenant's personal details including their photograph plus other information on children or other dependents living at the property. TSSI named this system enSign and worked closely with BHP to ensure the content of the Agreement and supporting system checks would dramatically reduce the opportunities for subletting.

### Client Profile & Business Challenge

Although classified as an outer London Borough, Brent shares many features of an inner-city area; demand for housing exceeds supply, the population is growing, there are low levels of owner occupiers and high levels of unemployment. These factors combine to give the borough considerable difficulties and it predicts a shortfall of 4,600 houses per year over the next five years with over 25% of households living in unsuitable accommodation. With such high pressures on housing stock, it is essential that subletting be eliminated.

BHP operates from three offices covering North and South Brent and Kilburn. The three offices are spread throughout the Borough and when this fact was combined with their outdated IT infrastructure, it meant that tenancy applications were often delayed or were processed inefficiently as staff had to consult each other frequently regarding a tenant's application. This caused many delays with the inevitable consequence that the Borough's housing stock was being used inefficiently as some properties could remain empty.

# Eliminate Tenancy Subletting Fraud

## The Solution

TSSI worked with BHP to install the new system into the three BHP locations that produced Tenancy Agreements. Once enSign had been installed, council staff at any of the locations were able to enter or recall the information regarding the tenant, their dependents, and other occupants prior to printing the new, legally binding Agreement. The enSign system is linked directly to a pan / tilt / zoom camera which is controlled via enSign in order to take a high quality image of the person(s) signing the Tenancy Agreement.

The list of properties that can be offered to a prospective tenant is maintained within Brent's main Housing Management system. Each night, a list of available properties is automatically imported into enSign to ensure that staff only offer new Agreements for properties that are actually vacant.

After the enSign system was installed, tenants were quickly given a printed and bound copy of their Tenancy Agreement. Staff from all three locations are also able to view the complete set of "live" Tenancy Agreements and no longer have to wait for paperwork to move between offices in order to process applications. The signed Tenancy agreement is also stored on Brent's Electronic Document Management system to comply with legal requirements. The complete, integrated solution ensures that data is entered more accurately, Agreements are issued more efficiently thus using the housing stock more efficiently and providing residents with an improved service.

## The Business Benefits

For Brent Housing Partnership, as well as its equivalents in Haringey and Southwark, capturing the Tenant's image has reduced significantly the opportunity for identity impersonation, and therefore discouraged attempts at fraudulent subletting of social housing. Brent now benefits from more streamlined administration and improved support for investigation teams who can now check the identity of the tenant against a high quality digital image of the person who signed the Tenancy Agreement.

Tenants enjoy improved customer service and no longer have the expense of providing their own photographs for their tenancy file. Other agencies and services benefit from easier interchange of more accurate, comprehensive and timely information.

The enSign solution isn't just about TSSI's technology, support, training or Helpdesk. These are important, but they are secondary to the attention to detail and careful project planning between TSSI and BHP project managers to ensure the successful deployment of a high technology project.



## About that new Tenancy Agreement

*Mike Dwyer, Head of Standards & Procurement, Brent Housing Partnership*

"The enSign database has been a very effective use of an IT solution to improve service to customers and support housing management staff. The cameras and software are very easy to use and the link to our EDM tenancy files ensures we make full use of the system."



*Linda Footer, Senior Project Manager at BHP*

"Consultation meetings with tenants across the Borough allowed us to explain the system and ask for feedback. A few tenants had to be reassured that the new digital system of storing photographs is safe and that data storage complies with all legal requirements. The implementation went ahead after receiving permission from the Council's Housing Executive Committee."