



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

# Rogue Landlords Enforcement Grant

Prospectus



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November 2018

ISBN: 978-1-4098-5357-2

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## Introduction

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has a small amount of grant funding available to Local Authorities (LAs). The fund is to develop best practice amongst LAs as they undertake enforcement activities to raise standards in the Private Rented Sector (PRS).

The Government recognises that the PRS plays an important and growing part in our housing market and houses a diverse range of tenants including young families and those who might be vulnerable to exploitation by rogue landlords.

Local Authorities have been provided with a range of powers to take action against criminal landlords who are knowingly flouting their legal responsibilities by letting sub-standard and unsafe accommodation to tenants.

We want to encourage new or innovative approaches to taking enforcement action that can become self sustaining and be shared with other local authorities.

## Aim

To raise the standard of properties in the Private Rented Sector (PRS) by supporting projects that will help local authorities (LAs) to carry out their duties and use their existing budgets more effectively; and to develop or enhance existing PRS enforcement activities.

## Issue

The private rented sector is an important part of our housing market, housing 4.5 million households in England<sup>1</sup>. The quality of privately rented housing has improved rapidly over the past decade with 82% of private renters satisfied with their accommodation, and staying in their homes for an average of 4 years.

The Government wants to support good landlords who provide decent well maintained homes and is keen to strike the right balance on regulation in order to avoid stifling investment in the sector. But a small number of criminal landlords knowingly rent out unsafe and substandard accommodation. We are determined to crack down on these landlords and disrupt their business model.

Significant progress has already been made and local authorities have been afforded strong powers to require landlords to make necessary improvements to a property.

These include powers introduced under the Housing Act 2004, whereby, if a property contains potentially serious risks to the health and safety of the occupants, the local authority must act to require the landlord to take immediate action. Mandatory, additional and selective licensing are important tools in achieving this and Government has made reforms to these schemes since their introduction, for example by adding additional criteria to selective licensing and, this year, extending the scope of mandatory licensing. Government is currently undertaking a review of the effectiveness of selective licensing to ensure that we are providing LAs with the right tools.

The Housing & Planning Act 2016 introduced a range of further measures to help local authorities tackle rogue landlords and drive up standards:

- In April 2017: Civil penalties of up to £30k as an alternative to prosecution came into force; and
- Rent Repayment Orders extended to cover: illegal eviction, breach of a banning order or failure to comply with a statutory notice;
- April 2018: Banning orders for the most serious and prolific offenders came into force; and
- A database of rogue landlords/letting agents convicted of certain offences was introduced.

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<sup>1</sup> [English Housing Survey 2016 to 2017: headline report](#)

Over the past months, we have been talking to LAs about this issue. They have identified key challenges they face in enforcing against rogue landlords:

1. The need for better intelligence on housing stock and on landlords and agents operating in their respective areas
2. Data sharing between different authorities and agencies
3. Internal 'ways of working' issues, such as a lack of housing-specific legal expertise, poor in-house communication (eg between teams such as PRS housing, homelessness, tenancy relations and trading standards) and a lack of tools/strategies to effectively implement policy.

We are particularly keen to receive bids that address these areas, but we recognise that the list is not exhaustive, and bidders should not be confined to it.

## Purpose of the grants

We are looking to award grants to enable Local Authorities develop and share best practice relating to enforcement of standards within the Private Rented Sector (PRS). We want the grants to stimulate new thinking, help with building new partnerships and allow for innovative, proactive approaches to enforcement.

## What we are looking for

MHCLG is looking for LAs to innovate and test new approaches to improving capacity that have the potential to be rolled-out more widely. We are particularly interested in unlocking best practice in the following areas which LAs highlight:

- a. The need for better intelligence on housing stock and on landlords and agents operating in their respective areas
- b. Data sharing between different authorities and agencies. Identifying and bringing together different data sets to enable better targeting of enforcement tools at properties.
- c. Internal 'ways of working' issues, such as a lack of housing-specific legal expertise, poor in-house communication (eg between teams such as PRS housing, homelessness, tenancy relations and trading standards), a lack of tools/strategies to effectively implement policy.
- d. Innovative software. Feedback from the recent PRS LA road shows highlighted LA interest in an 'app' that could be used by enforcement officers when inspecting a property to record their findings, gather evidence and streamline the enforcement process. We are aware that some LAs are keen to develop what might become an invaluable component of the enforcement toolkit.

We will support the best ideas for increasing successful enforcement against rogue landlords and poor quality housing in the PRS. The ideas should be robust and able to tackle the persistent problems presented by landlords who break the law and provide poor quality housing. They should also be scalable.

We will also support projects that will enthuse and inspire others to adopt similar approaches more widely, with the confidence that comes from successful enforcement action and improved standards in the local PRS. The ideas should be able to be passed on to other LAs as examples of best practice and successful approaches. The LA will be able to illustrate the benefits of successful enforcement both to the organisation and residents of the area.

We encourage bids that demonstrate how the approach will support the self financing of enforcement action.

We would like to see a diverse range of approaches to tackling poor housing standards within the PRS and how to successfully enforce against rogue landlords.

Through the fund we encourage applications covering different scales of funding. Innovative approaches could involve small scale funding to build on an already successful project or developing a relationship with other organisations such as the police, Fire and rescue service, legal services or local housing advocates. We are also interested in approaches to join up across local authority departments such as Council Tax, Housing Benefit, Social Services & Trading Standards. The approach may also encourage and support tenants to proactively take action against poor standards through rent repayment orders. Alternatively, other approaches may require larger scale funding, for example to provide a digital solution or software enabling officers to make robust and timely decisions supported by evidence.

In summary, we want to support projects that:

- Are innovative in the way they tackle enforcement challenges.
- Can demonstrate how they will achieve positive enforcement outcomes and, where available, have clear supporting evidence.
- Explain how outcomes will be measured and how the success of the project can be evaluated.
- Demonstrate clear deliverability, good value for money and are financially sustainable.
- Enable the local authority to self finance future enforcement activity.
- Are able and willing to share their experiences and learning, both honestly and widely.

## How to apply

Applications for grants from the rogue landlords fund should outline details of your organisation and the geographical area that is covered. You should make clear any other grant funding linked to the issues surrounding poor quality housing such as the Controlling Migration Fund previously received.

The application should also provide a detailed overview of current enforcement activities and any challenges encountered when taking enforcement action that could be addressed through your bid.

Please complete the proposal form (annex A) providing a detailed plan (no longer than 12 sides of A4) of how the funding would be used to improve enforcement activity and how this could be shared and adopted by other LAs across England.

While we are looking for innovative and new approaches we are not necessarily looking for something that has not been thought of before. It is more important that the grant will deliver real improvements and enable the LA's enforcement strategy to become self sustaining.

What will distinguish between a good proposal and an excellent proposal is a clear and structured plan detailing the issues the proposal will address around local enforcement action against poor standards and rogue landlords and how the idea can be widely shared to other LAs.

Bids should be submitted in writing (either email or hard copy) to [Matthew.Mulley@communities.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.Mulley@communities.gov.uk) – Matthew Mulley, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 3rd Floor, Fry Building, 2 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DF.

Officials within the MHCLG will assess all bids received will take the final decision on which bids to support.

## Amount of funding

There is no minimum or maximum bid accepted as part of the competition, and each bid will be judged on its merits in accordance with the assessment criteria. However, bids should be proportionate to the size of the fund and scale of the project, and linked to the target outcomes.

## Deadline

The competition will run from 8 November 2018 the deadline for applications is: 30 November 2018



## Timing

The £2 million funding has been made available for the financial year 2018/2019. Schemes will therefore need to be able to mobilise and spend the money provided, and support people as soon as possible.

The application process commences on 8 November 2018 and will remain open to receive applications until 30 November 2018.

Bid assessment will be carried out over the four weeks following the end of the competition, and it is our intention to let applicants know the outcome of their bids on 4 January 2019

Payment under the Rogue Landlord Enforcement Fund will be on a per scheme basis. Funding will be paid out in accordance with the timescales specified for the scheme.