Information and guide for landlords on dealing with the aftermath of a sudden death in the home.
The Chartered Institute of Housing
The Chartered Institute of Housing (CIH) is the professional body for people involved in housing and communities. We are a registered charity and not-for-profit organisation. We have a diverse and growing membership of over 22,000 people – both in the public and private sectors – living and working in over 20 countries on five continents across the world. We exist to maximise the contribution that housing professionals make to the wellbeing of communities. Our vision is to be the first point of contact for anyone involved or interested in housing.

CIH Scotland has more than 2,300 members working in local authorities, housing associations, housing co-operatives, Scottish Government and Government agencies, voluntary organisations, the private sector, and educational institutions. The CIH aims to ensure members are equipped to do their job by working to improve practice and delivery. We also represent the interests of our members in the development of strategic and national housing policy.

The Scottish Government
The Victims of Crime Branch within the Criminal Justice Directorate of the Scottish Government develops, in partnership with stakeholders, policies to improve services for victims of crime. The Branch oversees progress on implementation of both the review of the Scottish Strategy for Victims and of the National Standards for Victims of Crime. Most recently, it has overseen the development of the Victim Notification Scheme and the introduction of the Victim Statement scheme. In addition, the Branch provides grant funding to support organisations including Victim Support Scotland, PETAL and the Rape Crisis Helpline. The Branch produces information for victims; including the Victims of Crime in Scotland Website and various information packs and leaflets.

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Information and guide for landlords on dealing with the aftermath of a sudden death in the home.
Introduction

Most landlords at some point will have to deal with an extraordinary situation in one of their properties, one that they will have no prior experience of and little training to prepare them for. With 13.5% of RSL properties¹ becoming vacant in 2007/08 as a consequence of the previous tenant dying, the death of a tenant may not necessarily be described as extraordinary. However, from time to time the circumstances surrounding the death can be. These can vary widely from homicide², through to a tenant who dies in suspicious circumstances or who dies without a will and/or no family. In these situations there are a multitude of issues for a landlord to consider, such as; who cleans up, how are properties re-let, how are neighbours’ concerns addressed and what legal matters need to be regarded? At the same time, landlords need to be able to go about their business in a way that does not inadvertently cause further suffering to the bereaved, victims and families of victims and neighbours during an extremely difficult time.

² Throughout this document the word homicide refers to the acts of murder and culpable homicide
These situations can be complex, can take a disproportionate amount of time to resolve and require a pragmatic and sensitive approach. The purpose of this document is to look at some of these situations and provide information to help a landlord respond to them effectively.

**This includes providing:**

- Information on the roles and responsibilities of housing and other services and agencies,
- Sign posting to sources of advice, support and information,
- Practice examples,
- Case studies.

This information is primarily focused on the sudden death of a tenant in a social rented tenancy and how that relates to housing management practices. However, there are common processes that can apply across a range of other similar situations. These include the death of a member of a tenant’s household, a serious assault that does not result in death, sudden death in other tenures (such as temporary accommodation or the private rented sector). In these circumstances the information provided is likely to be equally applicable.
Information and guide for landlords on dealing with the aftermath of a sudden death in the home.
The Context

Headlines on the level of homicides in Scotland can make stark reading. According to reports, it has the highest homicide rate in Western Europe. However, it is important that this information is taken in context. The figures for 2007/08\(^3\) show a recorded 114 homicides across the whole of Scotland, which equates to 22 victims per million of the population and this represents a fraction of the total reported serious assaults of 6,853\(^4\) for the same period. Whilst each homicide is a shocking and horrific incident, it is just over half the number of those who died as a consequence of unintentional injury in the home, at 217\(^5\) for 2007. In addition, the number of deaths in Scotland that resulted from drug overdose was 455\(^6\) whilst the number of probable suicides was 838\(^7\). Therefore, in terms of the overall reason for death, and sudden death in particular, homicide is a small proportion with other causes being significantly higher.

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5 Information Services Division. 2008. Deaths as a result from an unintentional injury the Home, adults aged 15 and over. http://www.isdscotland.org/isd/servlet/FileBuer?namedFile=UI_Table14_Adults_Dec08.xls&pContentDispositionType=inline


Causes of Sudden Death in Scotland 2007

Homicide 114
Unintentional injury in the home 217
Drug overdose 455
Probable suicide 838

However small, the figures do not reduce the impact these situations have on the day to day services of social housing landlords. One landlord was in the unfortunate position of having to deal with four sudden deaths in as many months. These ranged through homicide, suicide and accidental death. Each situation required sensitive handling, whilst business continued as normal for the majority of tenants and customers.
Using this document

The document is laid out in stages which more or less track the sequence of events following a sudden death in the home. It is intended to be web based and when viewing the document this way, clicking with the mouse on the stage you want to view will take you to that section. The stages provide links to other useful websites or publications and these can be access in the same way. Details of some practice examples and case studies are anonymous in order to protect the identity of victims and families. If it would be helpful to contact the organisations that have provided information for this guidance, this can be arranged by contacting CIH Scotland\(^8\). The document may be revised from time to time to provide updated information, new case studies and practice examples.

\(^8\) Chartered Institute of Housing Scotland (CIH). scotland.policy@cih.org
Stage 1

Roles and responsibilities
The role of the police, the role of the landlord and local authority emergency accommodation, helping tenants to access welfare benefits advice.

Stage 2

Support and Assistance
The role of Victim Support Scotland and others, cleaning up and repairs, what is covered by insurance.
Stage 1 Roles and responsibilities
Stage 2 Support and Assistance
Stage 3 Housing benefits and legal matters
Stage 4 Staff support and community reassurance

Stage 3
Housing benefits and legal matters
Housing Benefit, succession and other legal matters, moving on.

Stage 4
Staff support and community reassurance
Processes for providing staff support, community reassurance and re-letting, prevention and monitoring.
Stage 1 Roles and responsibilities
Stage 2 Support and Assistance
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Stage 3
Housing benefits and legal matters
Housing Benefit, succession and other legal matters, moving on.

Stage 4
Staff support and community reassurance
Processes for providing staff support, community reassurance and re-letting, prevention and monitoring.
When a homicide or suspicious death has occurred in the home the landlord will most often be informed by a third party, such as the police, neighbours or family members. However, on occasion the landlord may become concerned about a tenant’s welfare, in which case a series of quick checks can be helpful before contacting the police, such as;

- When did neighbours last see the tenant,
- Is the rent being paid,
- Is anyone in the tenant’s household vulnerable,
- Are social work or other support services involved with the household?

Where a death has occurred and it is not clear whether the police are involved or who is responding to the situation, a landlord’s first point of contact may be with the Local Authority Liaison Officer (LALO). Most local authorities have a Police LALO based within the organisation who operates as the information link between the police and other local services. In the absence of a LALO, the Scottish Police website provides local contact details, news and other useful links.

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Stage 1

**Roles and responsibilities**

The role of the police, the role of the landlord and local authority emergency accommodation, helping tenants to access welfare benefits advice.

Stage 2

**Support and Assistance**

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Stage 1  Roles and responsibilities
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Information and guide for landlords on dealing with the aftermath of a sudden death in the home.

- The role of police
- The role of Victim Support
- Housing benefits and legal matters
- Staff support

Stage 1: Roles and responsibilities
Stage 2: Support and Assistance
Stage 3: Housing benefits and legal matters
Stage 4: Staff support and community reassurance
If a death in a home is classed as suspicious or unexplained then the police, acting as agents of the Procurator Fiscal, will take control of the property to ensure that all evidence is gathered and all required examinations take place. Suspicious or unexplained deaths can include death following a drug overdose or where a body has been found after a period of time. During the time the property is in police control the landlord and/or the tenant will not be able to access the area. The control of the property will usually involve Police barrier tape, with a uniformed officer acting as security. The area will be co-ordinated by a Crime Scene Manager (CSM) who is normally of the rank of Detective Sergeant and whose role it is to co-ordinate entry to the property by the relevant experts, such as Biologists, Scene Examination Branch etc. It is also the role of the CSM to ensure that no other persons enter the ‘scene’. The complexities of the case dictate how long it is before a property will be returned to the tenant/landlord and this could be hours, days or months. However, the property may still not be accessible to the landlord/tenant immediately following this because a defence solicitor could also have an opportunity to inspect the scene.

Where part of the scene includes a communal area then the police will prioritise these areas for examination to allow people to access their homes at the earliest opportunity.

**STAGE 1**


The Scottish Government has developed and produced an information pack that provides clear, factual information to families dealing with the loss of a loved one through homicide. The pack takes a step by step look at the processes, terminology and legal framework. It also provides links to other useful organisations and guidance on dealing with the media. The accompanying leaflet ‘Coping with grief following murder or culpable homicide’ explains some of the symptoms those who are grieving will experience.

Stage 1 Roles and responsibilities
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Communication with the police

There are no standard protocols in terms of communication between the police and others, such as landlords, but the CSM is expected to develop local relationships and lines of communication, and make the relevant people aware when a homicide has occurred. This would include the landlord where the property was rented. This initial contact will most often be after the property has been seized and the CSM will continue to be the main contact during this period. However, victims, or family members of victims, will often have a Family Liaison Officer (FLO) appointed to them who may also act as a link between the family and the landlord. The FLO is a Police Officer who is part of the investigating team and who has received specialist training to support a family when a serious crime has occurred. The FLO works with the victim and family up to the stage of prosecution, when the role of liaison is passed to the Victim Information and Advice Service.

In the event of a sudden death it may be appropriate for the landlord to designate an agreed ‘key worker’ who can ensure information is received and followed up appropriately and to act as the first contact for the police, any advice or support services and the bereaved, throughout the process.

STAGE 1

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The role of the landlord and local authority

When an area becomes a crime scene there is a clear role for the landlord in supporting the displaced household(s) to find alternative accommodation. Whilst most landlords will have property that may be vacant, unless it is furnished it is unlikely to provide a practical or appropriate emergency solution, in which case it may be necessary to approach the local authority homelessness services for help. In terms of the legislation, the household would meet the homelessness criteria laid out in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987\textsuperscript{13} part II (revised) because;

- They have accommodation, but it is unreasonable for them to continue to occupy the property, or,
- They have accommodation but cannot secure entry to it.

Under these circumstances there is a duty for the local authority to provide temporary accommodation. RSL and local authority landlords will have contacts within the homelessness service and may be best placed to make the approach on behalf of the household. This will help to minimise distress to the family and ensure that the homelessness services staff understand the circumstances concerned and are sensitive to the particular needs.
In the longer term, the tenant may wish to move permanently (see stage 3 of this document). However, it is important to emphasise that the use of emergency accommodation and the provisions of the homelessness legislation should not be a substitute for good quality advice on housing options, including the opportunity to pursue a housing transfer or mutual exchange.

Housing staff also have an important role in sign-posting to support services, social work, advice workers and others and can play a critical role in linking services together to respond to particular issues as they arise.

**Helping tenants to access welfare benefits**

Several factors can prevent a tenant or other household members from accessing money after a death, particularly in the immediate period following a death. The deceased may have been the main wage earner or welfare benefit claimant, there may be no will, joint accounts may be frozen, or important documents may be part of a crime scene. In these circumstances housing staff should refer to qualified welfare benefits or financial advice and this can be accessed via a Citizens Advice Bureau\(^{14}\) (CAB), local authority Welfare Rights Officer, the Department of Works and Pension (DWP) or a landlord’s own Welfare Benefits Officer. Money Advice Scotland (MAS)\(^{15}\) also provides links to most local money advice centres across Scotland, including local authority Welfare Rights Officers.

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\(^{14}\) A directory of bureaux can be found here [http://www.cas.org.uk/WebOfficeFinder.aspx](http://www.cas.org.uk/WebOfficeFinder.aspx)


\(^{16}\) Victim Support Scotland website [http://www.victimsupportsc.co.uk/page/victims.cfm](http://www.victimsupportsc.co.uk/page/victims.cfm)
Role of Victim Support Scotland and others

The role of Victim Support Scotland and others, cleaning up and repairs, who pays, what is covered by insurance.

A variety of support services may offer assistance to a bereaved family, in particular where a crime has been committed. The role of these services can differ and as it is a matter of choice for the individual, some may decline any form of specialist support. People affected by crime will be given the option of being referred to Victim Support Scotland\(^\text{16}\) (VSS) by the police, and may also self-refer later if they change their mind following an earlier refusal. This is something that a housing or tenancy support worker may also facilitate, by prompting the tenant to access the service if there are indications that specialist support would be helpful. A VSS worker would normally be in contact with the victim within a few days and will support them for as long they are wanted. The support provided may include practical or advocacy support in order to make sure the victim is receiving the appropriate help.
Information and guide for landlords on dealing with the aftermath of a sudden death in the home.

STAGE 2
Victim Support

Support provided to victim’s neighbour

Victim Support Scotland provided support to a local authority tenant who had tried unsuccessfully to help his neighbour after she had been stabbed and subsequently died. The victim had sought help and he had given her access to his home, where soft furnishings and other items of furniture were contaminated with blood. He was not insured, was on a low income and was unable to fund any replacement furniture or clean up. VSS helped them to find alternative furniture quickly, through charitable donations and the local furniture initiative. The family were unable to obtain help in cleaning up and undertook the task themselves.

CASE STUDY

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Other support agencies that offer help in times of crisis or grief are:

- People Experiencing Trauma and Loss (PETAL)\(^{17}\) - provides practical and emotional support and advocacy to people suffering loss of a family or friend through murder or suicide,
- Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland\(^{18}\) - provides trained counsellors who can also offer advice to anyone who has lost someone close to them,
- Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project\(^{19}\) provides a helpline service to bereaved lesbians and gay men,
- The Compassionate Friends\(^{20}\) - a group of people who have experienced the loss of a child and who provide support to others who have also experienced this loss,
- Samaritans\(^{21}\) - provide 24 hour a day telephone support to people who need someone to talk to; they can also be contacted by e-mail, in person or via letter.

\[17\text{ People Experiencing Trauma and Loss website http://www.petalsupport.com}\]
\[18\text{ Cruse Bereavement Care Scotland. http://www.crusescotland.org.uk/}\]
\[19\text{ Lesbian and Gay Bereavement Project can be contacted on 0207 4035969 http://www.londonfriend.org.uk/bereavementhelpline/}\]
\[20\text{ The Compassionate Friends. http://www.tcf.org.uk/}\]
Victim Support

*Support provided to victim of a serious assault*

VSS supported a victim of a stabbing who was attacked in his home. They supported him in successfully applying for a crisis loan for a new bed and bedding and helped him to make an application for a transfer to alternative accommodation. However, he was not insured and as he was unable to obtain assistance in cleaning the flat he and his sister undertook the task themselves.

**CASE STUDY**

Stage 1  Roles and responsibilities

Stage 2  Support and Assistance

Stage 3  Housing benefits and legal matters

Stage 4  Staff support and community reassurance
Cleaning up and repairs

Cleaning up, clearing a property and disposing of items that are biologically contaminated with blood or fluids, may require particular specialist methods. This is notwithstanding personal safety issues of the protection from blood borne viruses. Nor is it limited to incidents of homicide and assault, as mattresses or other items of furniture may also become contaminated following a natural death. Waste that can be described as ‘healthcare waste’, whether it is classed as hazardous or not, should not be disposed of in the usual way of domestic waste. Detailed advice on what can be disposed of where can be obtained from the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) or the local authority environmental services department.

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There are no national standards that apply to the cleaning of a home after a homicide and opinions will vary between what is considered aesthetically acceptable and the level of cleaning that makes an area safe. The issue that is most likely to be important to a bereaved person or where a violent assault has taken place is that no trace of the incident remains. Where a landlord is arranging the task of cleaning and clearing, the following questions will be helpful in identifying a reputable organisation;

- What assurances are there of the professionalism and discretion of the organisation and staff - specific examples are that the company ensures photographs are only taken where requested and no copies are kept, testimonials are verifiable and case studies are anonymous,
- Does the company understand and comply with the legislative framework for the disposal of special or hazardous waste,
- Are technicians appropriately trained and experienced?

Where repairs are required they will need to be assessed in the context of the incident and in recognition of a possible need for a higher than usual repair standard. Leaving blood trapped under floor boards, staining on walls and ceilings or damage from a forced entry is likely to have an impact on whether the current tenant will remain or on the swiftness of re-letting the property.

The cleaning and repairing of a property after a homicide or other serious incident can have a profound impact on the lives of the victim or bereaved. How thoroughly, quickly and sensitively it is done can make the difference between a tenant remaining in the home or choosing to move. For the landlord, this also translates into issues of tenancy sustainability and minimising future void loss.
Who pays and what is covered by insurance?

The Association of British Insurers (ABI) has provided some information to help in the assessment of when an insurer will cover the cost of cleaning up after a homicide or serious assault. In essence, the individual insurance policy should always be consulted, however, the ABI clarifies some general principles and specific situations, set out below;

**Insurance claims**

- Most household insurance policies cover Malicious Damage to the building and contents and can also be extended to cover Accidental Damage, which normally incurs an additional premium because it is more comprehensive than Malicious Damage cover alone. The scope of policy coverage will be an issue which should be considered on a case by case basis,
- Insurance companies will seek to help their customers at all times by dealing with all claims professionally and efficiently. In the event of the policyholder’s death, the policy coverage in place is likely to indemnify the Executor for any damage caused, subject to the terms and conditions of the policy or policies in place. The policy could also be transferred to the Trustee of the property,
- Where the policyholder may also be the offender, but claims provocation or self-defence and is yet to be tried, the insurer will look at the merits of the claim. If it believes that the policyholder has, through their own actions, deliberately caused damage to the property, then the claim will not be paid. If, however, the insurer believes that the policyholder has caused the damage accidentally and they have the appropriate cover, the claim will be paid,
• Floorboards and electrical wiring will be covered by buildings insurance,
• If the policyholder is the victim and lived alone, relatives should be deemed to have an interest in the property and be able to claim for the damage under the policy of the victim, via the executor,
• In cleaning and carrying out repairs the insurers will usually try to restore the property and the contents to the condition they were in before the damage took place,
• Damage would be assessed on a case by case basis and would normally see blood stained carpets removed and replaced and floorboards and walls cleaned to a high standard,
• Where the area affected is communal the insurance policy will generally cover the area of the property that is legally owned by the policy holder, including the share of any common areas.


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A number of well publicised cases\textsuperscript{25} have highlighted occasions in the past when bereaved families and friends had been left to clean up the home after the homicide of a loved one. Social housing representatives on the 2008 ‘Cleaning Homes after Homicide’ working group acknowledged that most social landlords would undertake to have a property cleaned after a homicide where the tenant has no insurance cover for the area affected. These situations arise so rarely that the impact on budgets for most would be minimal, with the exception of smaller housing associations. It is possible that the landlord’s building insurance policy would cover the cost of cleaning and repairs, but it would depend on what is covered in the individual policy.

The Association of Chief Police Officers\textsuperscript{26}(ACPOS) announced in early 2009 that the police will meet the costs of decontamination and cleaning where the responsibility for doing so does not lie elsewhere. This is administered locally and follows a recommendation by the Senior Investigation Officer of the Police.

\textsuperscript{25} http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/scotland/7170181.stm
\textsuperscript{26} Association of Chief Police Officers (ACPOS) http://www.acpos.police.uk/Index.html
\textsuperscript{27} A directory of bureaux can be found here http://www.cas.org.uk/WebOfficeFinder.aspx
Housing Benefit and death

Housing Benefit and death, succession and other legal matters, moving on.

Housing Benefit (HB) is paid to a claimant for the period that they occupy a property. This means that when the claimant dies, the HB stops on the following Sunday, regardless of the circumstances. A remaining partner or other member of the household can make a claim themselves, along with other welfare benefits, as long as they are occupying the property (they do not have to be the tenant). In circumstances when the property cannot be occupied because it is a crime scene or where the tenant or tenant’s household requires emergency accommodation and is liable for two rental costs, specialist welfare benefits advice should be sought, for example via Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), landlord’s own Welfare Benefits Officer or a local authority Welfare Rights Officer. For the landlord, ensuring that the tenant obtains timely advice on maximising benefits and that the rent continues to be paid is very important, both in terms of rental income and in avoiding arrears for the tenant.
Succession and other legal matters

Under the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001\(^{28}\), where there is no qualified person to succeed a Scottish Secure Tenancy, it will end following the death of the tenant. However, there are a number of people who may have a right to succeed the tenancy, in which case the tenancy does not end but is passed on to the qualified person. This can be an important distinction and one which the landlord’s information systems should recognise, as a break in a tenancy can affect matters such as a tenant’s Right to Buy. Succession can only happen twice, for example from a husband to a wife and then finally to a child. Schedule 3\(^{29}\) of the Act specifies who can be a qualified person and states that the property must have been the person’s main or principal home at the time the tenant died. There is a hierarchy of qualified persons, with certain categories such as wife or same sex partners taking precedence over carers. However, rights of succession do not apply to Scottish Short Secure Tenancies.

In all cases when a tenant dies with no relatives and has left no will, the estate reverts to the Crown. This means that a landlord does not have the right to dispose of items from the estate and should seek legal advice before taking any action. Where there is family or an executor dealing with succession and other legal matters.

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the estate, the landlord will need to be clear on how long the family have to empty the property, what charges may be made to the estate during this time etc. It is good practice to provide written information, such as in a leaflet or letter, to give the family and others an opportunity to read and understand what their responsibilities and rights are. The Scottish Government publication *Information about what to do after someone dies in Scotland, and about succession and inheritance law* provides general information which may be useful to both housing staff and to the tenant’s family and friends in the event of a death.

**Moving on**

It is not unreasonable for a family who have experienced a trauma in the home, e.g. a homicide or serious assault, to request a housing transfer. However, with pressures on housing stock and low turnover in the social rented sector, this is unlikely to be a quick solution. Nevertheless, in most cases it should not be necessary to sign-post victims and families of victims to homelessness services for a referral or nomination, although this may be part of the solution by advising on a range of housing options. Many landlords can award a level of priority to transfer applicants as ‘exceptional circumstances’, ‘special cases’ or a ‘management transfer’ through their allocations policies. These are reserved for those unique situations that are not accounted for elsewhere in the allocations policy, and may be applicable in the circumstances following a homicide or serious assault.
It is also important to advise the tenant, as far as is reasonable, on the consequences of a move from the current tenancy. This includes the possible reduction of rights. For example, if the tenancy began before 30 September 2002 and is subject to the Right to Buy (RTB) any new tenancy would not ordinarily retain the same level of RTB. However, in some circumstances and where a tenant is moving for “housing management reasons” a case may be made for the tenant’s rights to be protected, as if there was a requirement on the tenant to move by the landlord. In addition, it may not always be in a families’ best long term interest to move if that means moving away from informal support networks, schools, health and care professionals etc.

When considering a transfer, the proximity to family or friends of the assailant is likely to be a great concern for the tenant. For example, one family was successfully transferred to a new home, but discovered after moving that a family member of the man who had murdered their father lived directly behind them. This information had not been available to either the landlord or the family prior to the move. The situation may have been avoided if the move had been ‘risk assessed’ e.g. by a short life, multi-disciplinary group. Such a group could support a tenant to determine if a move and/or additional support is the right choice for them and to share appropriate information. In most cases the housing ‘key worker’ is likely to be in the best position to convene and co-ordinate this group.

Processes for providing staff support

Processes for providing staff support, community reassurance and re-letting, prevention and monitoring.

As with many housing management activities, clear procedures are a helpful mechanism for providing support to front-line staff. This applies particularly in situations that rarely occur, as they ensure a consistency of approach and clarify the parameters, policy position and guidance. In addition, they remove the need for lengthy discussions at the point the situation occurs and therefore save both time and unnecessary anxiety.

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Procedures may feature;

- Ensuring liaison with finance/revenues and other sections not directly involved in housing management,
- The information to be given to the bereaved, clarifying their rights and responsibilities and where support and advice can be obtained,
- The nomination of a key housing worker who will work with the household, co-ordinate other housing services and be the link to the police and other agencies,
- The counselling, training and support that will be available to help staff deal with the incident,
- The community reassurance tools that are available, where required,
- What insurance cover the landlord has that will cover cleaning and repairs,
- A list of firms that are able to deal appropriately with the clearing and cleaning of properties contaminated with body fluids (see Stage 2).

Providing clear information, in leaflet or in a similar format to bereaved families, letting them know what the landlord’s policy and practice is, can also alleviate further anxiety for both the housing officer and the family.

STAGE 4

Glasgow Housing Association (GHA)

Managing workplace stress

GHA estimated that a level of sickness absence was linked to the stress some of its front-line staff were experiencing after they had witnessed violent or traumatic incidents. It began to actively address this by developing a number of initiatives that included a monthly e-zine that provided advice on healthy living and highlighted health and safety issues. It also changed the counselling service it was providing and have seen a tenfold increase in its use as compared to the previous service.
Community reassurance and re-letting

In a high profile case involving the sudden death of a tenant, it is likely that there will be an amount of negative publicity that may generate community anxiety and can spill over into difficulties with re-letting the property. In turning around negative publicity and anxiety a landlord may want to make use of local resources available such as Community Wardens and the involvement of local tenant or resident groups. Community Wardens are usually managed by the local authority and have roles\(^\text{33}\) including:

- Community engagement,
- Working with vulnerable groups,
- Community safety.

In addition, the Scottish Government, in its document *Promoting Positive Outcomes: Working Together to Prevent Antisocial Behaviour in Scotland* \(^\text{34}\) has given a commitment jointly with COSLA\(^\text{35}\) and ACPOS to deliver Public Reassurance Training to front line police and local authority staff by 2010 and confirmed that it sees community engagement and public reassurance as key priorities.

Tenant and residents’ groups can also support the landlord and the community in recovering from a sudden death or serious incident in the community. Being the people ‘on the ground’ they often have local knowledge and credibility in the community and are able to address concerns and offer suggested solutions.

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\(^\text{35}\) Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA). http://www.cosla.gov.uk/


In most circumstances however, examples suggest that incoming tenants are pragmatic about the reason the property is empty and will accept the offer as long as all evidence of the incident is cleaned and cleared (see stage 2).

There may be other particular circumstances when a landlord will want to let the property using its sensitive lettings policy, which will have the effect of removing it from the usual allocation process. In doing so it must clearly record the evidence for taking this step and ensure that it;

- Complies with the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 (amended), section 20 and 21,
- References current allocations guidance in the evidence given for not allocating the property to the applicant with the greatest need,
- Meets the standard expected by the Scottish Housing Regulator.

In addition, where the landlord operates a Choice Based Lettings scheme (CBL) and will be advertising the property to let, it is often appropriate to let the family of the deceased tenant know when and where this will be advertised.

**STAGE 4**

**Stage 4 Staff support and community reassurance**
Cube Housing Association

Community and staff reassurance

Cube Housing Association has developed a partnership arrangement with the Glasgow Community and Safety Services in a scheme called ‘Cubewatch’. The aim of this is to encourage people to ‘Stand Up, Speak Up’ to address the under reporting of issues that affect the area. This is to help build community spirit and to bring in the correct resources. The focus is on community safety, youth engagement, diversionary activities and anti-social behaviour, with a drive to change behaviour where possible and to challenge the few who won’t. The Community Enforcement Officers that patrol the area have developed a positive profile in the community. When a series of incidents occurred in an area owned by Cube HA it was able to increase use of the partnership to help to develop and support a reassurance strategy, in consultation with the local community.

Staff and others who had been involved with the incidents were provided with free access to anonymous counselling services that are independent of Cube HA.

Cube did not have any difficulty in re-letting properties even though there was local awareness of the incidents.
Prevention and monitoring

Whilst the focal point of this guidance has been homicide and sudden death, there are some situations that a landlord can actively help to prevent. This applies in particular with tenants who may be vulnerable for a variety of reasons. The use of telecare to provide reassurance and monitoring is well recognised in older people's housing, but less so in generic housing. Targeted use of this technology can, amongst other things, support a tenant to feel safe and prevent the need to move home. An example of telecare being used this way is when victims of domestic abuse are supplied with alarms to alert the police when they are in fear of, or at risk of, attack and CCTV monitoring provides added reassurance and is used to gather evidence that may lead to prosecution.
Brochure and Zmag design and concept: ink-tank and associates (http://www.ink-tank.co.uk)
**Castlerock Edinvar**

*Use of telecare for reassurance and monitoring*

Castlerock Edinvar use telecare to monitor the activity of vulnerable tenants in its sheltered housing schemes. The movement detectors are fitted to ‘notice’ when the tenant moves between the bedroom and the bathroom and lets the manager know that they are awake. The manager is alerted if there is a lack of movement during the tenant’s usual waking hours and help is sought.

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41 Castle Rock Edinvar Housing Association http://www.placesforpeople.co.uk/cre/


Use of telecare to provide vulnerable tenants with added reassurance

The death of a tenant in one of its properties highlighted a particular vulnerability of children of single parent households to Edinburgh City Council. As a consequence, it initiated a new practice in its multi-storey blocks that use a concierge system. The monitoring of key fobs was used in these blocks to identify possible abandonments and usage was checked on a 10 day cycle. Following the incident, a review identified that the fob system could be used to reassure more vulnerable households by checking fob usage over a shorter cycle. A process was developed that allows tenants to ‘sign up’ to the enhanced monitoring which takes place on a minimum 3 day cycle, with the information being recorded and monitored by the block managers.
Brochure and Zmag design and concept: in-tank and associates (http://www.ink-tank.co.uk)
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Updates and amendments
When amendments are made to this document they will be highlighted in the document and on the link from the CIH Scotland\(^4\) web page. CIH Scotland actively encourages members and others to share experience and practice and welcomes feedback at scotland.policy@cih.org

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- Stage 1 Roles and responsibilities
- Stage 2 Support and Assistance
- Stage 3 Housing benefits and legal matters
- Stage 4 Staff support and community reassurance
Feedback

Did you find the information in this document useful? Yes/No

Do you have any comments or is there anything that you would like to see added? e.g. other useful links or information

Thank you for your feedback

CIH Scotland can also be contacted at scotland.policy@cih.org