

How you can blow the whistle on housing cheats

Hillingdon Council continues to successfully fight social housing fraud to ensure residents in genuine housing need have permanent accommodation.

Since April 2011 Hillingdon has reclaimed 168 council owned properties which were either empty, illegally sublet or obtained through providing false information. These properties were then re-let to residents and families who were living in temporary accommodation and on the housing waiting list. In total, 38 properties have been recovered since April 2014.

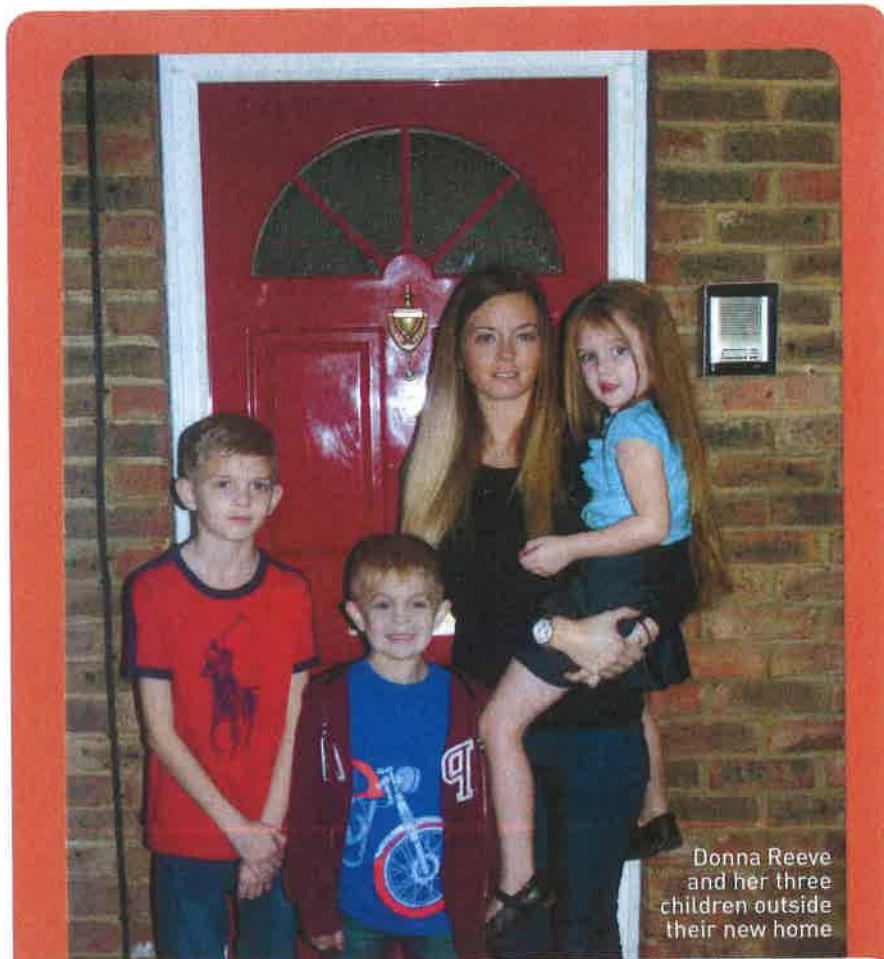
A one bedroom first floor flat in Hayes was reclaimed after a neighbour notified the council that the tenant had a dog in the property. The council could not make contact with the tenant and a home visit revealed two subtenants who had rented the property after seeing an advert on the classified adverts website Gumtree. The subtenants were unaware it was a council property. The tenant had sublet the property and was receiving a rental income he wasn't entitled to. He was jailed for fraudulently claiming more than £25,000 of benefits he wasn't entitled to.

Last year there were also several cases of housing fraud where the tenant emigrated and sublet their council property. A two bedroom ground floor flat in Hillingdon was investigated after the tenant failed to pay their rent. Home visits revealed the property was illegally sublet and the tenant was living in America. An eviction warrant was obtained and the subtenants abandoned the property, allowing the council to recover and re-let it to someone in genuine housing need.

Cllr Philip Corthorne, Cabinet Member for Social Services, Health and Housing, said: "People who are committing social housing fraud are using up valuable housing space and depriving families and vulnerable people on the waiting list which isn't fair. The council will use all its powers to reclaim money or

property that has been fraudulently claimed. If you have suspicions or information that someone you know is committing fraud please contact the council."

If you are aware of anyone illegally subletting a council property please contact us on our 24-hour, confidential and anonymous hotline 0800 389 8313 or email fraud@hillington.gov.uk.



Donna Reeve and her three children outside their new home

Our new perfect home

Donna Reeve and her family moved into a three bedroom adapted property in Hayes after it was reclaimed by the council. The previous tenant had left the property and moved other family members in who had also been provided with social housing. The council was paying rent on two properties and the tenants hadn't informed the council of the change in circumstance.

Donna and her three children are now very pleased to be living there. Previously they were in a two-bedroom maisonette on a split-level, which was too small. "My three children were sharing the same bedroom with very little room to play. We had a shared

garden and no dining room. One of my sons has a disability and special needs and the property wasn't adapted for his needs and the car park was a walk away. There were two flights of stairs which was really difficult."

Donna said: "We are all a lot happier and very settled. It feels like we are at home now rather than being stuck somewhere."

"It's perfect for us. We have a dining room with a table and now enjoy sitting down to dinner together. We have two bathrooms and a wet room. We can also park our car outside the house. It's made such a difference to all of us and the children definitely love having more space."