

## Scrutiny Group review summary: Ending a tenancy - February 2026

### Cottsway's Scrutiny Group explained...

We are a small group of customers who meet regularly and work with other residents and staff to review Cottsway's services and performance to help make improvements.

We recently carried out a detailed review of the process for ending a tenancy.

Our aim was to understand the experience of customers who were moving out, whether to another Cottsway home, another landlord, or in cases of bereavement.

We wanted to find out what works well, what could be improved, and how the process could be as clear and supportive as possible.

### What we did

To get a full picture, we:

- Reviewed Cottsway's letters, forms, policies, and website.
- Reviewed other housing providers websites to identify good practice.
- Surveyed customers who had recently ended their tenancy, asking about giving notice, receiving information, returning keys, and their overall experience.
- Interviewed one customer in more detail to hear about her experience.
- Met with four staff members to understand the process from their perspective.
- Looked at complaints received since April 2024 to see where problems had occurred.

We focused on the customer journey, from first considering ending a tenancy to handing back the keys - what communication did customers receive, what could Cottsway do better? This included looking at information provided for bereavement cases, which can involve additional legal steps.

### What we found

#### Customer experience



Most customers were happy with the process and praised staff for being helpful and supportive.



Many customers used Customer Services (phone or email) or the website to find out what to do.



Some customers did not receive confirmation letters or checklists, which caused uncertainty about next steps.



Returning keys can be difficult, especially for people with disabilities, limited transport, living in rural areas or far from the designated office.

## Bereavement cases

- Guidance is generally thorough, but some relatives were unclear about their legal status or what needed to be done when there is no Executor.
- Complaints highlighted situations where bereaved relatives experienced delays or extra distress because information was not properly recorded.

## Website and information

- The website provides clear guidance, including a separate page on bereavement.
- Some other landlords provide online forms to give notice, videos, or clear photos showing how properties should be left - practices we recommend adopting.
- Information across letters, packs, and website could be better aligned to avoid confusion.

## Survey insights

- 77% of survey respondents were satisfied with the process, 23% were neutral, and none were dissatisfied.
- Customers valued flexibility, such as extensions to notice periods or support completing forms.
- Sending termination forms by email or post worked well, some returned forms in person.
- Customers who received a checklist were more confident about preparing their home for handover.

## Staff input

- Staff explained additional steps not always visible to customers, such as the process around returning keys.

They confirmed legal procedures for ending tenancy after a bereavement, including serving notice to the Public Trustee when no Executor is in place.

## Recommendations

To make the process clearer, fairer, and easier, we recommend:

1. Introduce a clear written procedure and publish the new Tenancy Management Policy online.
2. Improve website information:
  - Include an online form to give notice.
  - Provide clearer guidance for bereaved relatives.
  - Make sure website instructions match the termination pack.
  - Update images to be more appropriate.
3. Develop a full information pack with photographs and guidance on property standards and potential charges, including an Easy Read version.
4. Send the termination letter and information pack promptly to ensure customers know exactly what to do.
5. Consider using videos or leaflets to explain the process.
6. Explore easier options for returning keys, such as key boxes at properties, and consider home visits during the notice period.
7. Ensure customer service staff are fully trained on legal requirements, especially for bereavement cases.

These steps will help make sure customers are treated fairly, feel supported, and have confidence in the process of ending their tenancy.

## Next steps

Cottsway has welcomed the report and is developing an action plan that we will monitor progress against. We would like to thank all customers, family members, and staff who contributed to this review. Your feedback is helping us make ending a tenancy simpler, smoother, and less stressful for everyone.