Letting Agents Immigration Workshop Report

Executive Summary

On 26th February 2014 at Orion House, Bessemer Road, Welwyn Garden City AL7 1HH.

A workshop was held to explore concerns around the UKBA initiative to manage illegal immigration by holding Landlords and their Agents responsible for checking the immigration status of tenants.

In summary, in question order the following issues were identified as being of concern:-

1. The proposed legislation looks to impose fines of £1000 for a first offence then £3000 per repeat offence per individual illegal found.
2. The requirement to recheck eligibility at contract renewal.
3. The possibility that Landlords would have to report Tenants placed by the Agent to the Home Office.
4. Management of associated discrimination issues.
5. Identity theft was recognised as being a complex area of concern that required attention.
6. In particular it was recognised that illegal immigrants are more vulnerable to identity theft exploitation.
7. That it is now important to use the best available identity checks to avoid these issues.
8. The areas of fraudulent credit applications from a Landlord's address, delivering bad credit ratings associated with that address, was recognised as a real problem.
9. The current reality of whistle blowers reporting illegal immigrants to the UKBA resulting in visits to the Landlords address was considered to be a concern.
10. The subsequent public naming and shaming of offenders both Landlords and Agents was considered to be a real concern.

This survey was taken from a cross section of local Letting Agency professionals in Hertfordshire, including Carnegie House Letting Ltd, Imagine Group, Kings of Hertford, Mather Marshall Lettings Ltd, Hatfield and Steven Oates Lettings Limited.
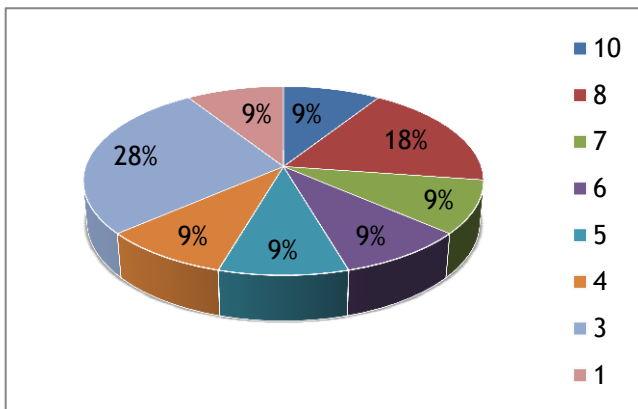
All graphs represent scores 1 to 10 where 1 is small concern and 10 a big concern.

Q1.
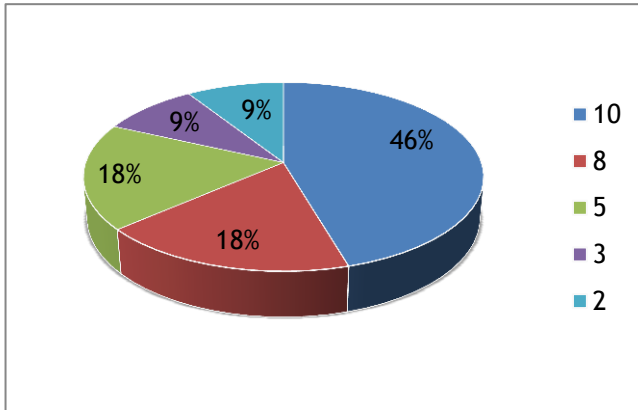
64% (people scoring 8 and 10 out of 10) of people were very concerned about the effects of the proposed legislation on their businesses scoring 8 and 10 out of 10. The average score on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.3

Q2.

The concern around placing a tenant who was unable to provide the correct documentation at the time of re check delivered a cross section of opinions. The overall view being that it was unlikely to happen and if it did they would just have to find a new tenant. This delivered an average score on a scale of 1 to 10 of 5.2.
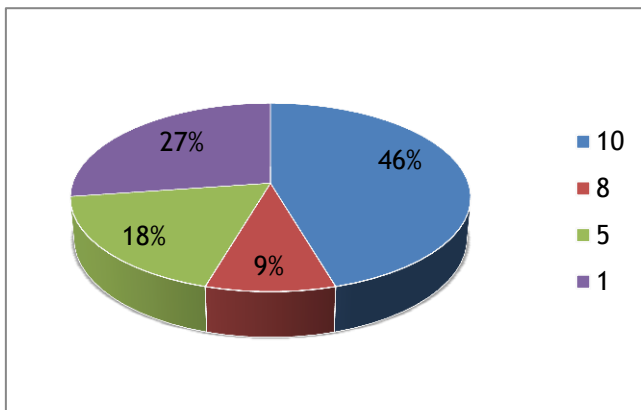
Q3.
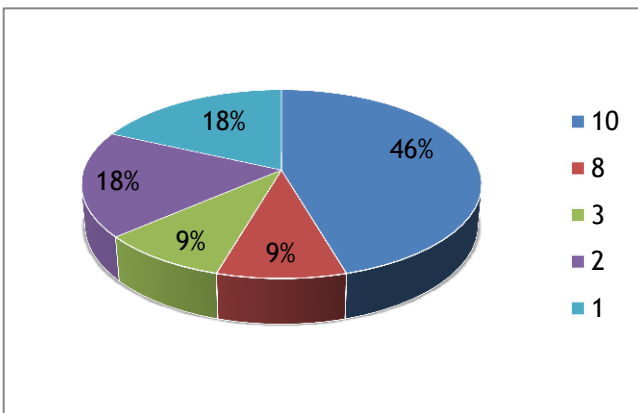
55% (people scoring 8 and 10 out of 10) were very concerned that the landlord would have to report a suspected illegal migrant that had been place by the letting agent, to the Home Office. The average score on a scale of 1 to 10 was 6.1.
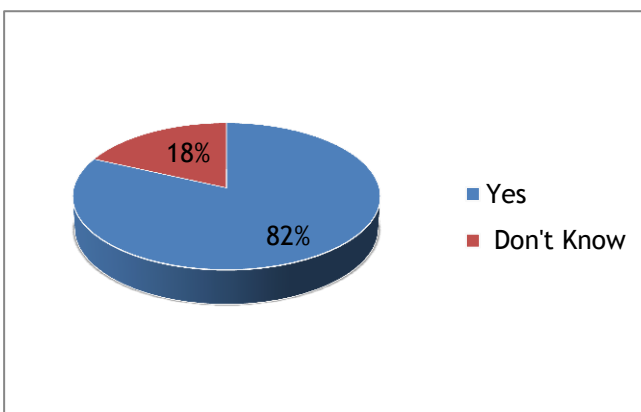
![uComply logo — Immigration compliance made simple]

Q4.
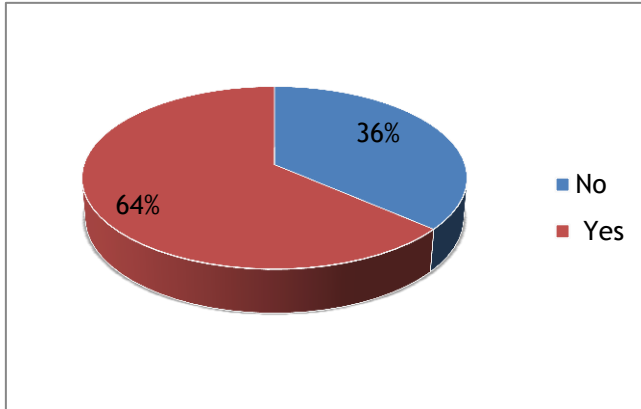
64% were concerned about discrimination issues regarding tenancy agreements.

Legend:
- No
- Yes

(36% No, 64% Yes)

Q5.

55% (people scoring 8 and 10 out of 10) were very concerned about the potential impact of identity theft by a tenant. The average score on a scale of 1 to 10 was 6.5.

Legend:
- 10
- 8
- 5
- 1

(46% – 10, 9% – 8, 18% – 5, 27% – 1)

Q6.

There was a consensus of opinion that illegal immigrants are vulnerable to exploitation in the area of identity theft 82% agreed with this.

Legend:
- Yes
- Don't Know

(82% Yes, 18% Don't Know)

Q7. The individual procedures employed by the letting agents were captured. It was recognised that immigration is an increasingly important area and that it was important to ensure that all tenants placed have the right to reside in the UK and that their status is continuously checked.

Q8.
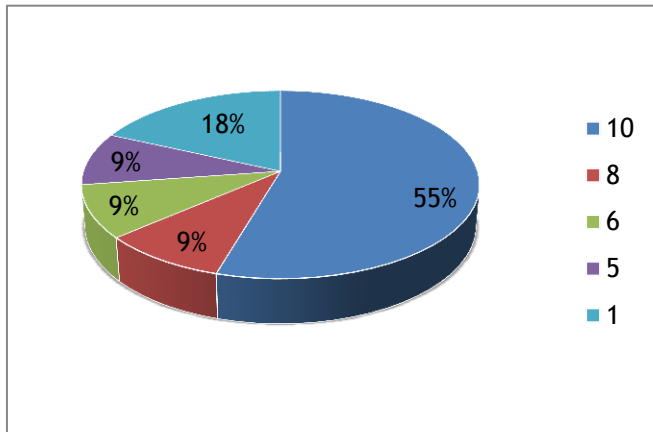
64% (people scoring 8 and 10 out of 10) were extremely concerned about the possibility of a tenant causing bad credit scores to be associated with the landlord's property. The average score on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.4.

Q9.
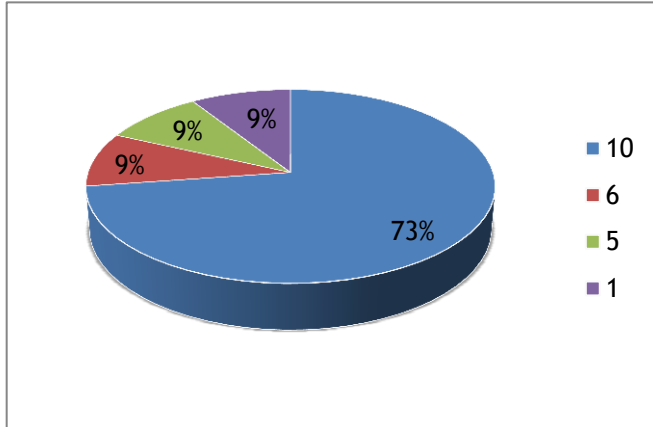
73% of respondents recognised the likelihood of whistle blowing activity and consequential UKBA visit to their client's properties. The average score on a scale of 1 to 10 was 8.4.

Q10.
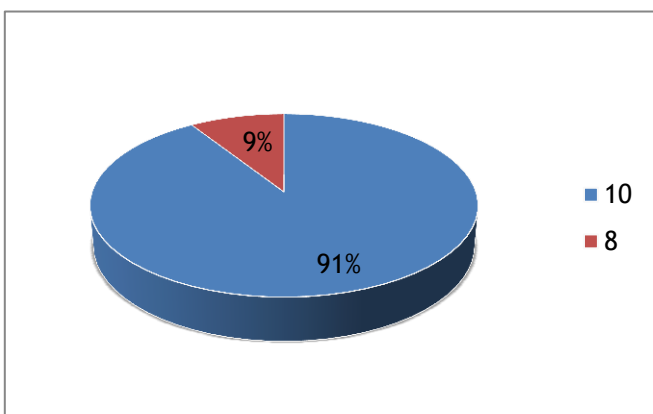
Unsurprisingly, 100% (people scoring 8 and 10 out of 10) of respondents recognised that being named and shamed by the UKBA would be detrimental to their reputation. The average score on a scale of 1 to 10 was 9.8.