

Landlord accreditation



housing

Private landlords can benefit from belonging to a local accreditation scheme

Local authorities up and down the country are increasingly taking a strategic approach to the housing needs of everyone in their community. They recognise the important role of the private rented sector in providing accommodation for a diverse range of households. As part of this new approach, many local authorities are seeking to work with residential landlords and give them a stake in decisions that affect them. This is being done in a number of ways. For example, by offering landlords information that helps them to manage their properties better, by arranging meetings or forums where landlords can exchange views with local authority officers and, increasingly, by setting up voluntary accreditation schemes that recognise and reward landlords who manage their properties to a good standard.

This leaflet looks at the role of accreditation schemes for landlords, the benefits of joining one and where to find more information.

What is accreditation?

A set of standards (or code) relating to the management or physical condition of privately rented accommodation. Landlords who join a scheme and abide by the standards are “accredited”. Accreditation schemes are voluntary. There is no compulsion for landlords to join, but there may be many advantages.

What types of accreditation are available?

This may differ from area to area. No two accreditation schemes are exactly the same. However, there are two main types – schemes that accredit the person who manages the property and those that accredit the property itself. Most schemes combine elements of both but the “unit” of accreditation is normally the property. For example, schemes may include criteria relating to property condition, management practices and the landlord’s past management record. The standards set by schemes also vary. Some set high standards from the outset, whereas others seek to increase standards progressively over time.

Do all of my properties have to be accredited?

Most schemes that accredit properties do not require landlords to include all the properties they let. However, landlords are encouraged to bring other properties forward at a later stage. Schemes that accredit landlords usually require them to submit all of their properties within the boundaries of the scheme for approval.

If accreditation is voluntary why should I join?

There are a number of benefits common to all accreditation schemes and many schemes offer other incentives as well.

All accredited landlords benefit from:

- 1 the status of being publicly identified as a good landlord;
- 1 distancing themselves from incompetent or unscrupulous landlords;
- 1 the business advantage of advertising their accredited status to tenants who place emphasis on good quality and well managed accommodation.

Incentives offered vary from scheme to scheme but may include:

- 1 a liaison officer who can help landlords to deal with any department of the local authority, similar to a “one stop shop”;
- 1 an improved relationship with housing benefit departments;
- 1 information on housing management and access to training and development opportunities;
- 1 consultation on proposals that may affect landlords, such as changes to legislation or local housing strategies;
- 1 access to grants and loans to renovate properties to relevant standards set by the scheme;
- 1 advice on how to tackle anti-social behaviour;
- 1 discounts and group purchase on goods and services such as property insurance; and
- 1 access to rent deposit or rent guarantee schemes operated by the council.

What benefits are there for tenants?

Tenants can benefit from knowing that if they choose to rent from an accredited landlord, the property will be in good condition and the tenancy will be managed to a good standard.

What benefits are there for local communities?

Accreditation schemes provide a range of benefits to local communities. It is in everyone's interests if housing is well managed and kept in good condition. A successful accreditation scheme can help to increase the supply of good quality accommodation, to the benefit to existing tenants and potential tenants who may not have considered renting privately in the past. It also helps to foster better landlord/tenant relationships and reduces the need for intervention by council officers.

Who operates accreditation schemes?

Most schemes are run by local authorities – usually the housing or environmental health department. In some areas schemes are run by other organisations with an interest in housing provision. For example, universities may operate schemes in areas where there is a large student population. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive runs a scheme in Northern Ireland.

Can letting agents join an accreditation scheme?

The National Approved Letting Scheme is an accreditation scheme which is open to all letting agents and estate agents who manage residential accommodation. The scheme sets minimum service standards for agents and requires them to handle their clients' money safely. More information can be found on the NALS website at www.nalscheme.co.uk.

Can tenants be accredited too?

Some schemes offer accreditation for tenants who agree to abide by standards of responsible behaviour and respect their accommodation, neighbours and the contractual agreement with their landlord. There are many advantages to accredited tenant status when seeking alternative accommodation.

Where can I find out more?

Contact your local council for advice about accreditation schemes that may be operating in your area. Schemes are often run by the Housing or Environmental Health Department. In Northern Ireland, contact the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Their email address is

info@nihe.gov.uk or visit their website at www.nihe.gov.uk or write to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, The Housing Centre, 2 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8PB

Alternatively, or for more general information about accreditation, contact the National Accreditation Network UK. Their e-mail address is info@anuk.org.uk or visit the Network's website at www.anuk.org.uk. or write to the National Accreditation Network, Unipol Student Homes, 155/157 Woodhouse Lane, Leeds, LS2 3ED.

The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister has published research and good practice guidance on landlord accreditation schemes, which is available to download from www.communities.gov.uk/privaterented

Further copies of this leaflet are available free of charge, from:

DCLG Free Literature
PO Box 236
Wetherby
LS23 7NB

Tel: 0870 1226236
Fax: 0870 1226237
Textphone: 0870 1207405
E-mail: odpm@twoten.press.net

DCLG Website: www.communities.gov.uk/housing

The following organisations are pleased to endorse accreditation:

Government Organisations

Department for Communities and Local Government
National Assembly for Wales
Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Landlord Representative Organisations

British Property Federation
National Federation of Residential Landlords
Residential Landlords Association

Tenant Representative Organisations

Shelter
National Union of Students

Housing Organisations

Accreditation Network UK
Chartered Institute of Environmental Health
National Approved Letting Scheme
Higher Education Institutions



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