

Private Landlords Newsletter

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Contact Us

Please send us your thoughts and comments by email to janet.mcloughlin@hart.gov.uk

The increasing role of the private rented sector

Why has the private rented sector become so important?

Over the past few months, the Government has announced a number of changes to the social rented sector, which combined with changes introduced in Hart, will have a long-term impact on the housing market in Hart. The private rented sector has increased by 62% from 1991-2007 (UK Housing Review, 2009) adding one million more homes to the sector and it is expected to expand further in the future as a result of the following changes.

What is changing?

- The introduction of a new 'affordable rent' level, set at 80% of market rent, for all new affordable housing and some re-lets, is expected to create competition with lower private rents
- The introduction of flexible tenure lengths for Housing Association tenancies to replace life-long secure tenancies, is expected to make affordable housing more comparable with tenancies in the private rented sector
- A reduction in the amount of capital grant funding for new affordable housing which is expected to reduce the number of properties built and limit availability
- The ability of local authorities to discharge their homelessness duty to a private rented home is expected to be introduced by the Localism Bill next year
- The impact of changes to Local Housing Allowance (LHA) that limits payments to the 30th percentile of local market rents is expected to increase demand for these properties among people on low incomes
- In Hart, the points-based allocation system has been replaced with a banding scheme, which ranks applicants within each band in accordance with the time they have been waiting for a home
- Housing Register applicants living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council will have to wait just as long for an affordable home as they would if they were privately renting

So, what is the effect of these changes?

All these factors lead to an increased need for private rented homes, particularly within the LHA level. If you have suitable property(s) the Council can help you find potential long-term tenants.

We need you...

Get recognised - Accreditation for landlords

What is it?

Landlord accreditation is a set of standards relating to the management and physical condition of privately rented accommodation. Hart District Council, in association with the National Landlords Association (NLA) offer accreditation courses to enable local landlords to become accredited.



What's in it for me?

It enables you to learn and improve your skills in managing your properties and learning about the legislation and regulations that affect the private rented sector.

The NLA accreditation scheme is recognised nationally and Hart District Council are in the process of setting up a networking group for landlords who have successfully completed this course.



When's the next course?

The next course will take place on **Monday June 6th at Southwood Golf Course in Farnborough**. If you wish to book a place you can either ring Charlotte Clements of the NLA on 0207 840 8920 or go online via the events area of the NLA website at www.landlords.org.uk.

And finally...

Accredited landlords – how do you see a networking group operating? How often would you want to meet? What areas would you like covered and would you like speakers to discuss subjects of interest?

Warm Front Grants

Warm Front is a Government scheme set up to tackle fuel poverty by providing financial assistance for people on certain benefits to install insulation and heating systems. The grants are available to tenants of private rented housing as well as those who own their own home. If one of your tenants is on a relevant benefit they may apply directly to Warm Front for assistance, Warm Front will then contact the landlord for authority to undertake the work at **no cost** to the landlord or the tenant. Eligibility for Warm Front grants is dependent upon the tenant being in receipt of certain benefits. For further information telephone Warm Front direct on **0800 316 2805**

Insulate Hampshire

Under this scheme all owner occupiers and tenants will be offered loft and/or cavity wall insulation at the price of £99 each, some restrictions regarding the size of property and access to loft may apply. Tenants can apply for these grants but will need to have the landlord's permission before works go ahead. This scheme is due to start in July 2011, please contact Housing Services on 01252 774420 or check the website www.hart.gov.uk for further details nearer the time.

£99



Local Housing Allowance – Direct payments to landlords

Under current provisions LHA can be paid direct to landlords if a claimant has difficulty in managing their financial affairs because of dependency issues, illness, or if past experience shows that it is improbable that they will pay their rent or has previously had payments made to the landlord under Regulation 95 (arrears)

From 1st April Local Authorities can make payment direct to the landlord where they consider that it will assist the tenant in securing or retaining a tenancy. The DWP state that for a tenancy to be secured or retained it is implicit that the rent should be affordable to the tenant. This additional provision is a temporary provision but the DWP expect it to remain in place until longer-term decisions about direct payments are made in the context of Universal Credit.

It is hoped that the new safeguard provision can facilitate negotiations by which lower rents are accepted in exchange for direct payments to the landlord, encourage them to set their rent levels that HB tenants can afford or to let to HB tenants in the first place.

Direct payments will continue unless the rent becomes unaffordable during the tenancy; any increase in the rent could affect the decision to make direct payments.

For a new tenancy the LA will need to see evidence that the rent has been reduced and is affordable or that the letting would not be agreed without direct payments and the rent is affordable. For full details of this DWP circular please see www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/a4-2011.pdf



Fire Safety Law Update

The Housing Act 2004 introduced the housing health and safety rating system (HHSRS), along with licensing provision for certain larger houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) and management regulations for all HMOs. The HHSRS is the principle tool for assessing fire safety risk and regulating standards in all types of residential accommodation. HMO licensing conditions provide specific regulation of fire safety standards for HMOs in the private sector.

Where it applies, the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 places duties on landlords to risk-assess fire safety in their properties, to take adequate precautions to reduce the risk and to manage any that remains. The duties apply throughout a range of property types, but in HMOs, flats and maisonettes they apply only within common areas (although landlords need to consider any risk created within the private areas too). These duties are enforced by fire and rescue services or the Local Authority.

Failure to comply with any duty imposed by the Fire Safety Order or requirements of an enforcement notice or prohibition notice is a criminal offence and carries a level 3 – 5 fine on conviction (£1000 and £5000 respectively). For further information on fire safety you can visit their website at www.hantsfire.gov.uk; click on the box 'Business fire safety' and you will find links to various articles which you may find useful.

Please see our revised leaflet "The Rent Deposit Scheme (Information for Landlords)" at: www.hart.gov.uk/housing-advice

Free Fire Safety Training is available at Rushmoor Fire Station on 22nd September 2011 for approximately 3 hours.

To book please either ring 023 8062 6890 or e-mail businesseducation@hantsfire.gov.uk

Places are allocated on a first come first served basis.

Your Views Wanted



Choice based lettings (CBL) scheme (For further information see www.harthomes.org.uk)

All housing association vacancies in Hart are advertised weekly. Hart has on average 600 people looking for a home who bid using our CBL scheme every week. If you advertised your property with us, free of charge you can reach a wide range of prospective tenants at no cost to you!

Would you be interested in advertising your property on our choice based letting scheme too?

Housing people under 35 years old

With changes to Housing Benefit people aged 35 and under will only be able to receive housing benefit to rent a room in a shared house from 2012. This means we will need more shared accommodation. Can you help us?

Do you have any other ideas about how we can increase our supply of shared housing for single people under the age of 35?



Please send your comments on the above to janet.mcloughlin@hart.gov.uk

Don't forget!

every home counts
Making the most of empty properties in Surrey and Hampshire

REPORTING
AN EMPTY PROPERTY

BUYING
AN EMPTY PROPERTY

In the UK there are nearly 800,000 empty properties. Eight local authorities in Surrey and Hampshire are working in partnership to reduce the number of empty properties in our area by providing advice and assistance to the public and owners of empty properties to help bring them back into use.

'Every home counts' is a useful source of information about empty properties in particular **Reporting, Buying, Selling, Owning and Letting**. Visit www.everyhomecounts.info for further details.

For more information contact us:

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