

accreditation news

June 2004

Bury Landlord
ACCREDITATION SCHEME

the **newsletter** for private landlords
in the Bury area, produced by the
Bury Landlord Accreditation Scheme



Representatives from Hampton Estates
with their Certificate of Membership

Launch secures interest of many local landlords

BURY Landlord Accreditation Scheme was officially launched on 11 February 2004 at the Met Café Bar in Bury.

Around 50 people including a number of private landlords attended the event, which celebrated the partnership between Bury MBC and Manchester Methodist Housing Association and congratulated Hampton Estates on becoming the first BLAS member.

Staff from MMHA and Bury MBC were on hand to answer questions about accreditation and also displayed information on the East Bury Initiative

Area and the work of the Housing Standards Team.

Guests were welcomed by Stephen Porter, Chief Executive of MMHA with Violet Barnard, MMHA's Regional Manager, providing an outline of how the scheme operates.

Speaking about the scheme Violet said: "Private landlords won't be the only ones to get something out of this scheme. Tenants will benefit from knowing that if they choose to rent an accredited property, it will be in a good condition and the tenancy will be managed to a good standard."

WELCOME!

WELCOME to the first edition of Accreditation News, the quarterly newsletter for private landlords operating in Bury.

This newsletter aims to promote the benefits of accreditation, as well as providing landlords with information and advice. We hope that you will find the contents helpful.

The team welcomes any suggestions for topics to be included in future articles, so please contact us with your ideas. We look forward to hearing from you soon!

About BLAS

BURY Landlord Accreditation Scheme has been set up to reward and recognise landlords who manage and maintain their properties to a good standard.

The scheme has been funded by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister Homeless Directorate and has two main aims; to improve property standards within the private rented sector in Bury and as a result, increase the amount of good quality homes in the Borough for people in housing need.

Bury Council and **Manchester Methodist Housing Association** have worked together to develop a Code of Practice that relates to the management and maintenance of private rented property. Landlords who join the scheme must comply with the standards set out in the Code of Practice for their properties to be "accredited". Once the standards have been achieved member landlords will qualify for a number of incentives, as well as advice and support from the Accreditation Team.

The scheme has initially been launched in the East Bury Initiative Area, but it is hoped that it will be extended in the future. Not only is this free service good for landlords, but tenants will also benefit from knowing that if they choose to rent from a member of BLAS, the property will be in good condition and the tenancy will be well managed.

[Learn more about BLAS in detail, on page 2...](#)

Your questions answered

How Do I Join?

JOINING BLAS is straightforward, with staff from the Accreditation Team on hand to help you through the process.

You can obtain an application form either by contacting the Accreditation Co-ordinator on 01204 356711 or downloading one from our web site www.mmhg.org.uk/blas

Once we have received your completed application form, we will arrange for your properties to be inspected by a member of the Housing Standards Team.

It is important that you let your tenants know why their home is being inspected. We have information leaflets specifically aimed at tenants to help you to do this.

If there are any repairs that you need to do to bring your property up to accreditation standard, we will write to you and let you know, giving a timescale during which the work should be done.

We will also need copies of the most recent annual Gas Safety Certificate and Electrical Inspection Report (this lasts for five years and should be carried out by an NICEIC approved electrician) and a copy of the tenancy agreement that you use.

Once you have met the standards you will be issued with a Certificate of Membership and given your Landlords Information Pack. You will also be able to use the scheme logo to advertise your properties and for correspondence.

We will then keep you updated on incentives and training events as well as providing you with a wide range of information and services, tailored to your requirements.

What can I expect if I join?

As well as having a clear marketing advantage over non-members, joining the scheme will give you access to a number of

incentives that have been developed by consulting with landlords to find out what would be useful to them.

These incentives include:

- the use of our members' logo
- a comprehensive Landlord Information Pack which includes:
 - fact sheets on tenancy issues, money matters, repairs and useful contacts
 - information on energy efficiency, neighbour nuisance and health and safety
 - a model inventory
 - information on other services available within the Borough, for example the Bury Bond Board
 - regular updates on relevant issues
- access to a list of local maintenance contractors
- preferential insurance policies for scheme members
- use of a standard model tenancy agreement
- a referencing service for prospective tenants who have had previous tenancies with Bury MBC or housing associations in Bury
- quarterly newsletters
- Access to Accreditation Grants for properties within the Pimhole Renewal Area and Mosses Initiatives Area

- improved links with Housing Benefits and the Rent Officer

- a marketing service for empty properties
- training events for scheme members

We are keen to find out if there are any other services that scheme members would find useful and will be happy to take on board your suggestions.

What is an Accredited Property?

An accredited property meets the standards set out in the BLAS Code of Practice. The Code of Practice has been developed by looking at landlords' statutory requirements and good practice, and is a minimum standard for the management and maintenance of rented properties.

In developing the standards we have looked at examples of good practice in accreditation schemes throughout the UK, in particular the National Accreditation Network's Model Scheme.

The standards cover the property itself and include:

- gas and electrical safety
- furniture
- fire protection
- repairs
- safety and security

They also contain management standards on, for example, tenancy agreements, insurance and deposits.

In complying with the Code of Practice, you are demonstrating that you are committed to providing good quality, well maintained accommodation.

For more information regarding the scheme, or to obtain a full copy of the Code of Practice contact: Babette Howard, Accreditation Co-ordinator on 01204 356711 or take a look at our web site: www.mmhg.org.uk/burylas



Do you supply furniture to any of your tenants?

If you do, then you need to make sure that all furniture and furnishings that you supply comply with the Furniture and Furnishings (Fire Safety) Regulations 1988.

Some materials used to fill or cover furniture may be a fire risk, highly flammable and may produce poisonous gases on burning, such as cyanide or carbon monoxide. The Regulations set out to phase out potentially dangerous furniture and furnishings and make sure that those left or newly provided can pass tests for fire safety.

The responsibility for providing safe furniture and furnishings can apply to the landlord or the agent. Normally, however, the agent is not responsible, provided that the contract for letting the property, including the furniture, is between the owner and the tenant. In this case it is the landlord that is responsible for complying with the regulations.

The following products are covered by the regulations:

- furniture intended for use in the home, e.g. armchairs, sofas, padded seats
- beds, sofa-beds, futons, head-boards, mattresses, pillows, cushions
- nursery furniture
- garden furniture suitable for use in the home
- loose and stretch covers for furniture

The regulations do not apply to:

- bed clothes, duvets and sleeping bags
- curtains or carpets
- furniture manufacture before 1 January 1950
- furniture owned by the tenant

The Regulations state that all furniture and furnishings must meet the fire resistance requirements for:

- properties let for the first time since 1 March 1993
- new, replacement or additional furniture provided for an existing letting since 1 March 1993
- all new tenancies created on or after 1 March 1993

Most domestic furniture manufactured after March 1990 should be fit for use in rented accommodation, but the best way to check that it does is to look for a manufacturer's label saying that the item complies with the Regulations, together with a warning 'CARELESSNESS CAUSES FIRE'.

You can get more information about these Regulations from the Trading Standards Service on 01332 716 315.



Need more advice? Here's a good place to start...

North West Landlords Association Ltd.
113 Tonge Moor Road
Bolton
BL2 2DL

Tel: 0845 345 1386
admin@nwla.co.uk
www.nwla.co.uk

Residential Landlords Association Ltd.
1 Roebuck Lane
Sale
Manchester
M33 7SY

Tel: 0845 666 5000
info@arla.org.uk
www.rla.org.uk

The National Landlords Association
78 Tachbrook Street
Westminster
London
SW1 2NA

Tel: 020 7828 2445
info@landlords.org.uk
www.landlords.org.uk

Gas safety - what you need to know

EVERY year about 30 people die from carbon monoxide poisoning as a result of incorrectly installed or badly maintained gas appliances or flues.

The Gas Safety (Installation and Use) Regulations 1998 places duties on landlords to ensure that gas appliances, fittings and flues provided for tenants' use are safe.

As a landlord, you are required to:

- ensure gas fittings and flues are maintained in a safe condition. It is recommended that they're serviced annually unless otherwise advised by a CORGI registered installer
- ensure an annual safety check is carried out on each appliance/flue. Before any new tenancy starts, you must make sure that these checks have been carried out within one year before the tenancy start date. If any appliances have been installed for less than a year, they should be checked within 12 months of their installation date
- have all installation, maintenance and safety checks carried out by a CORGI registered gas installer
- keep a record of each safety check for at least two years
- issue a copy of the latest safety check to existing tenants within 28 days of the check being completed, or to any new tenant before they move in

If the appliance fails the safety check, you must make sure that the fault is rectified before the equipment is used again. It is an offence to use, or allow the use of a gas appliance that you know is unsafe.

Failure to maintain your tenants' gas appliances could be fatal. Not only that, but you could risk being prosecuted and face a heavy fine or even imprisonment.

If you would like more information on gas safety, you can contact the Health & Safety Executive Gas Safety Advice Line on 0800 300 363, or take a look at their website at: www.hse.gov.uk/gas/index.htm

Ensuring gas appliances and fittings are correctly installed, well maintained and regularly checked is your responsibility as a landlord



Get in touch...

If you need any advice or information, we're only a stamp, click or call away!

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