



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



New health & safety standards in prospect

The Housing Health & Safety Rating System (HHSRS) is set to replace the current Housing Fitness Standard as the means of assessing housing conditions in private properties. The following is a brief summary of the HHSRS based on current Government guidance, although there may be changes system prior to its implementation.

The principle of the system

The principle behind the system is that a dwelling, associated outbuildings and amenity space, should provide a safe and healthy environment for occupants and visitors. A dwelling should be free from hazards and where they are unavoidable they should be made safe as reasonably practicable.

How will hazards be assessed?

Properties will be subject to a physical survey that will include the identification and assessment of any hazards found in the following categories: **damp/mould; radiation; noise; fire; excess heat/cold; uncombusted fuel gas; hygiene; hot surfaces; asbestos; volatile organic compounds; food safety; entrapment; biocide chemicals; crowding and space; water supply; explosions; poisonous gases; intruders; falls; ergonomics; lead; lighting; electrical; structural.**

The inspecting officer will then calculate a rating score for each hazard based on the severity of each hazard and its potential to cause injury to the occupiers. This assessment will be based on the risk to the occupant who is most vulnerable to the hazard. For example, stairs constitute a greater risk to the elderly, so for assessing hazards relating to stairs they are considered

to be the most vulnerable group. The very young as well as the elderly are vulnerable to low temperatures.

What action will the Council take to deal with hazards?

The action the Council takes will be based on three factors:

- The severity of the hazard score
- Whether it has a duty or a power to act
- A judgement about the best means of dealing with the hazard, including an assessment of the vulnerability of the actual occupant of the dwelling

The courses of action available to the Council will be to:

- Serve an improvement notice requiring remedial work
- Make a prohibition order, that closes the whole or part of a dwelling or restricts the number of permitted occupants
- Suspend the action and review the matter at a later date
- Take emergency action
- Serve a hazard awareness notice (give advice)
- Make a demolition order
- Declare a clearance area

The new powers will enable the Council to act in default and prosecute for lack of compliance. It will also enable it to charge and recover costs associated with enforcement action.

When will the system be introduced?

The new arrangements will be brought into force in April this year. The Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) is



Ease of entry for intruders will be among the hazards assessed under the new system

working in partnership with Asset Skills and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister with a view to publishing a guide to the system for landlords. CIEH is also working with Shelter to produce guidance for tenants. The full draft Operating Guidance is available for free download from the ODPM website www.odpm.gov.uk

We will ensure that you're kept informed of these changes in future editions of Accreditation News.

Re-housing Pimhole residents through the clearance process

Following on from the last newsletter Bury Council continues to buy in properties in the Pimhole Renewal Area clearance areas and would still welcome your assistance in helping to re-house residents that may require private rented accommodation both in East Bury and the wider borough.

The Council would like to build up a database of available accredited properties to rent in the private sector to help with the above. If you have any current vacancies or may have in the next few weeks which you think may be of interest to these residents please will you contact Humera Mannan on 0161 253 6348 for further details and to register your properties.

As we're sure you realise, accommodating everyone's needs and aspirations is extremely difficult and any assistance you may be able to offer will be greatly appreciated.



Is your property in the Pimhole clearance area?

If the answer is yes, and you are at present renting the property to a tenant here's something you need to know.

If your tenant leaves the property and you are thinking of selling on to the Council, they will only buy properties with vacant possession. This would mean that, if you decide to re-let the property after the original tenant/s are rehoused, the sale of your property could be seriously delayed as your new tenant would not be eligible for priority status on the Housing Register as they would have moved in after the Clearance Areas were declared.

Needless to say, this would also cause problems for the tenant who would then be in a position where they have to find alternative accommodation without any priority status from the Council.

If you have any queries about this issue please contact F. Reiss on 0161 253 6352.

Useful local contacts

Housing Benefit Service

Whittaker Street
Radcliffe M26 2DT
Tel 0161 253 5008
Minicom 0161 253 7408
Email: housingbenefits@bury.gov.uk

Bury County Court

Tenterden Street
Bury BL9 0HJ
Tel 0161 764 1344
Fax 0161 763 4995

Rent Officer Service

Unit 2, Tustin Court
Parkway
Preston PR2 2YQ
Tel 01772 554600

Rent Assessment Committee -

North West
20th Floor, Sunley Tower,
Piccadilly Plaza
Manchester M1 8BE
Tel 0161 237 9491

Residential Landlords Association

1 Roebuck Lane
Sale
Manchester M33 7SY
Tel 0845 665 1845
email: info@rla.org.uk
www.rla.org.uk

North West Landlords Association

113 Tonge Moor Road
Bolton BL2 2DL
Tel 0845 3451386
email: admin@nwla.co.uk
www.nwla.co.uk

Tackling anti-social behaviour

We need your views

The key agencies within Bury's Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership, including Bury MBC, GMP and Six Town Housing, have produced a draft strategy and Action Plan for dealing with anti-social behaviour (ASB) across the Borough. The strategy examines the 'triangle' of anti-social behaviour from 'low level' nuisance that can be addressed with a diversionary approach such as youth intervention work, to persistent and serious anti-social behaviour, which demands legal remedies such as ASBOs and evictions.

The four general aims of the Action Plan are to:

- *Formalise and standardise the way anti-social behaviour is reported and dealt with within the Borough*
- *Reduce the involvement of young people in crime and ASB both as victims and offenders*
- *Address environmental issues that exacerbate ASB and affect quality of life*
- *Ensure all social and private landlords take full responsibility for preventing and dealing with ASB affecting or perpetrated by their tenants.*

The fourth aim contains objectives to ensure that all landlords, both RSLs and private, have acceptable standards of behaviour

included in their tenancy agreement and all tenants are made aware of them at lettings meetings.

The second and third objective is to use the tenancy agreement fully to prevent and deal with ASB and make full use of legislative powers available.

The fourth objective is to ensure community cohesiveness and good neighbour relations on estates by using mediation and ensuring full involvement of tenant and community groups.

The fifth objective is to foster responsibility in private landlords through a Landlords consultation and focus group and to provide assistance to landlord from ASB teams if they co-operate with the Police / Council in addressing ASB in their properties or by their tenants.

Anti-Social behaviour is a problem, which affects a wide range of agencies, and individuals and it is essential to work together to address it. Landlords have a vital role to play as they have the tenancy agreement to help enforce standards of good behaviour and a range of sanctions available. It is important that the Police, the Local Authority and other partners provide the help and support to ensure Landlords can carry out their management functions

Reducing the involvement of young people in crime & ASB is one of the key points of Bury's action plan



effectively and anti social behaviour at their properties is dealt with effectively. We would like to invite private landlords to comment on the aims and objectives of the strategy in order that they are fully involved in Bury's response to anti-social behaviour. If you have any comments to make, please forward to Rachel Sayers, Anti-Social Behaviour Co-ordinator, Room 9 Bury Town Hall, Knowsley Street, Bury, BL9 0SW by Monday 13th March 2006.

Re-launched landlord forum a success

The Bury Private Landlord Forum was recently relaunched with over 30 landlords attended the event, including representatives from the North West Landlords Association.

The programme for the evening included a welcome and introduction from Councillor Mike Connolly, Deputy Leader of the Council; an update on current Housing Benefit issues and information on the new Local Housing Allowance; information about and a chance to feedback on Bury's local housing policy, including home improvement grants and mandatory HMO licensing; affordable warmth and Warm Front grants; the work of the Bond Board and an update on landlord accreditation.

Feedback from the event was very positive,

with a number of landlords asking to be consulted and involved in setting the agenda for the next meeting.

It was unanimously agreed that quarterly events would be beneficial to everyone and would provide an excellent opportunity not only for landlords to be consulted and informed about Council policies, but more importantly, to influence the decision making process.

A number of suggestions for future topics have been made by landlords who attended the event, including:

- Regular quarterly updates from the Housing Benefit Team.
- Bury's anti-social behaviour strategy and what help is available to landlords who are

experiencing problems with their tenants or problems with neighbouring properties.

- Training sessions for landlords on aspects of tenancy management, maybe in small workshops.
- Specific guidance for new landlords.
- Pension matters (SIPPS).
- Inheritance Tax and Capital Gains Tax.
- Fire safety advice.

Following on from this feedback, the next Landlord Forum will be held on Wednesday 15 February 2006 at 6.30pm - Peel Room, Elizabethan Suite, Knowsley Street, Bury. Agenda items will include Housing Benefit Update, Fire Safety in Privately Rented Properties and Developing a Good Tenants Register. Let us know if there is anything you would like to see at future meetings.

Landlord training

COMING
SOON!

Bury Landlord Accreditation Scheme, in partnership with the Residential Landlords Association are holding a one-day training course for landlords "Creating and Managing a Tenancy".

The course has been specifically designed to improve standards and develop knowledge and awareness of the responsibilities that a landlord has to tenants.

Like BLAS and Bury Metro, the RLA is committed to better quality private sector housing and realise the important role private sector Landlords play in achieving this goal.

This is why they are working with us to provide training for landlords that not only improves their knowledge and standards,

but also helps us to develop positive relations with landlords providing housing in Bury.

All course delegates receive a certificate of attendance and course notes including reference materials.

The cost for the day will be approximately £60 per person, including refreshments and a buffet lunch.

We are currently finalising a date towards the end of March, with a central Bury venue and will send you the details in good time for you to book a place.

Places are limited, so if you are thinking of attending, contact Babette Howard now on 01204 369506 (b.howard@mmhg.org.uk) to register an interest.

Course Contents to include:

Tenancy Types
Regulated (Sitting) Tenants
Company Lets
Contractual Tenancies
Unprotected Tenants
Licenses
Tenancy Agreements
Notices
Notice to Quit
Section 8 Notices
Possession
Unlawful Eviction
Damages for Unlawful Eviction
Special Damages
General Damages
Exemplary Damages
Aggravated Damages
Amounts Awarded
Harassment
Examples of Harassment



Get in touch:

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

Babette Howard

Accreditation Co-ordinator
Manchester Methodist Housing Association
Bayley House
St George's Square
Bolton BL1 2HB

Tel: 01204 365711
Email: b.howard@mmhg.org.uk
Website: www.mmhg.org.uk/burylas

Colin Hamer

Urban Renewal Officer
Housing Standards Team, Environmental Services
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Textile Hall
Manchester Road, Bury BL9 0DG

Tel: 0161 253 5075
Email: c.hamer@bury.gov.uk
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