

Safety & choice: Providing increased housing options to people who have experienced domestic abuse

Would you like to be put in touch directly with suitable prospective clients? Would you be prepared to have enhanced security features installed in your properties, at no cost to you?

Bury MBC are looking to develop close working links and referral routes with landlords who will accept individuals and families who have experienced domestic abuse.

It is currently estimated that domestic abuse affects around 2 million people in England and that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men will experience domestic abuse at some point in their lives. Domestic abuse affects people of both genders and of any age or ethnicity. In Bury, it is estimated that around 7,000 people experience domestic violence each year. Bury Police currently attend an average of 10 reported incidents each day. Of households who presented as homeless in Bury in 2005-2006, 24% had lost their last settled home due to violent relationship breakdown with a partner or other associated person.

Recent National guidance sets out the Government's aims to ensure increased, safe choices for people who have experienced domestic abuse and to provide safe and secure accommodation to people fleeing domestic violence. Support services should be designed to facilitate a variety of housing options and to support service users, wherever possible, to follow their preferred option. In the light of this guidance, the Bury MBC have developed a multi-agency Domestic Abuse Housing Options Strategy. The Strategy sets out a vision for domestic abuse services in the borough, which is;

"Safety and Choice: Supporting individuals to choose where they live and to live in their home in safety and without fear"



The main aim of the strategy is to work in partnership with key agencies to develop existing support services, so that service users can access the support they need quickly and effectively, and that services adapt and respond to their individual needs.

As part of the implementation of the new Strategy, Bury Strategic Housing Unit have reviewed procedures and referral routes in order to make sure that the systems used with the council benefit the service user and ensure a safe, efficient and choice based re-housing process. The new procedures encourage service users to take ownership of their housing situation and enable them to make informed choices in their housing options. Interviews also include detailed risk assessments to ensure that these choices are safe and appropriate.

As part of the implementation of the Strategy, Bury MBC are looking to develop close links with private sector landlords. It is hoped that applicants who chose to move into private

rented accommodation will be able to be referred to suitable vacancies as soon as possible. To enable this, the Strategic Housing Unit are hoping to develop a database of accredited landlords to be used when referring suitable applicants to private rented accommodation. Landlords will be able to inform the Strategic Housing Unit when they have empty properties and suitable prospective tenants can be matched to these vacancies.

All prospective tenants will have been interviewed by council officers and landlords will be informed of any relevant tenancy issues. Landlords who agree to join the database will also receive information and training on domestic abuse issues and have access to enhanced security features.

For more information, to join the database or to receive a copy of the Domestic Abuse Housing Options Strategy, please contact Genevieve Burleigh, Domestic Abuse Project Officer on 0161 253 6196 or email: g.burleigh@bury.gov.uk.

Get in touch:

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

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accreditation news

May 2007

Bury Landlord
ACCREDITATION SCHEME

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



Free invitation to the UK's premier landlord event

Enclosed with this edition of Accreditation News is your free invitation to the **Landlord Show** taking place on **Thursday 10th May 2007 12.30 - 8.00 pm at Manchester Town Hall**.

The show includes free seminars by industry experts on:

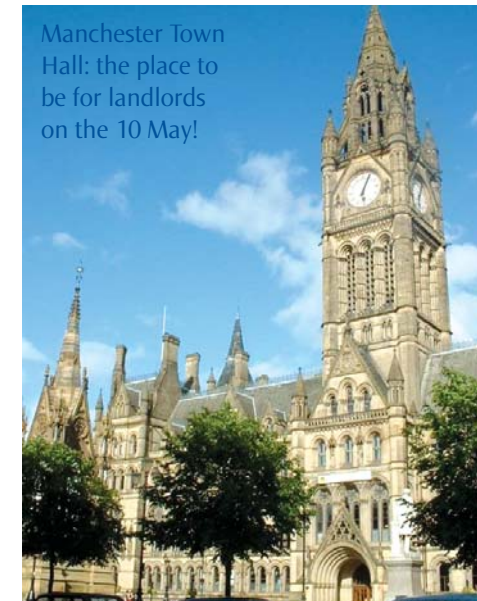
- Tenancy Deposits
- Buying properties below market value
- Avoiding bad tenants
- Inheritance tax
- Where to invest
- The benefits of Landlord Accreditation

There will also be an exhibition of a range of products and services including:

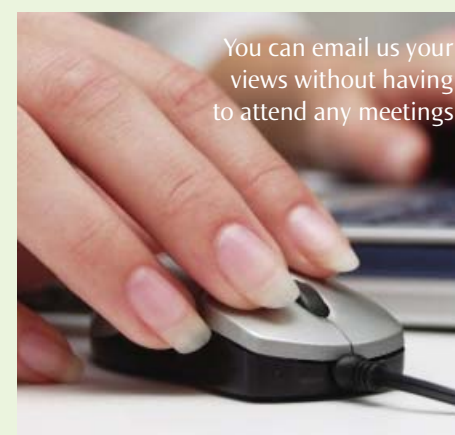
- Buy-to-let mortgages and landlord insurance
- Lawyers and tax experts
- Buy-to-let furniture and maintenance companies
- Online marketing services

To get your free tickets either complete the registration form on the leaflet and return to the freepost address, register online at www.landlordshow.co.uk or phone 0800 321 3028.

This event is supported by A-LIST



Manchester Town Hall: the place to be for landlords on the 10 May!



You can email us your views without having to attend any meetings

As providers of much needed housing and investment in the Borough, it's important that we take into account your views and suggestions when we make changes in

Your views are important to us!

areas of service delivery relating to private sector housing.

We're looking for a small group of landlords who will act as a sounding board and give their opinions, both positive and negative, about any proposals to change the way we work with you.

This doesn't mean coming to more meetings - we know you're busy people; rather we would either post or email relevant documents to you and ask for your feedback. Any feedback you give will help us to understand issues that you face as

landlords in Bury and help tailor our services to your customer requirements.

At the moment the Regeneration and Housing Standards Team is reviewing its Enforcement Policy which affects, owners, private landlords and Housing Associations and sets out how the Council operates its legal requirements to act on disrepair and hazards in domestic properties.

If you're interested in taking part in a 'virtual' consultative panel on this topic and others in the future, contact Babette Howard on 0161 723 6448 for more details.

HMO Licensing - a recap of what you need to know!

As some of you may be aware, Bury MBC is now on course to license houses in Multiple Occupation which fall under the Mandatory HMO Licensing part of the Housing Act 2004.

We have sent out information to landlords affected and recently held a workshop to help landlords with the application form and any queries or concerns they may have.

We are aware that some of you may still be unsure about whether or not licensing applies to you, so here is a recap of the main points which you need to be aware of.

What is a HMO?

The Housing Act 2004 has introduced a new definition of a House in Multiple Occupation (HMO). This new definition came into force on 6 April 2006.

If you let one of the following types of properties, it is an HMO:

- An entire house or flat which is let to three or more tenants who form two or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet.
- A house which has been converted into bedsits or other non-self contained accommodation which is let to three or more tenants who form two or more households and who share a kitchen, bathroom or toilet.
- A converted house which contains one or more flats which are not wholly self-contained (ie: the flat does not contain a kitchen and/or a bathroom and/or a toilet) and which is occupied by three or more tenants forming two or more households.
- A building which is converted entirely into self contained flats if the conversion did not meet the standards of the 1991 Building Regulations and at least one third of the flats are let on short term tenancies.

In order to be an HMO, the property must be used as the tenants' only or main residence and it should be used solely or mainly as residential accommodation. Properties which are let to students and migrant workers will be treated as their main residence, as will properties which are used as domestic refuges.

For further guidance on definitions contact the Regeneration and Housing Standards Team on 0161 253 5566.



What types of licensing are there?

The Housing Act 2004 introduced three different types of licensing. These are:

Mandatory HMO licensing

See the following section on mandatory licensing for more information.

Additional HMO licensing

Local Councils can choose to introduce additional licensing of other types of HMO's which are not subject to mandatory licensing. The Council have to consult local landlords before introducing additional licensing and they have to publicise it when it comes into force. Bury has no immediate plans to introduce an additional licensing scheme.

Selective licensing

Selective licensing may be introduced in areas of low demand housing or areas that have significant problems with anti-social behaviour. All rented property within a selective licensing area has to be licensed, regardless of whether or not the property is an HMO. The Council have to consult local landlords before introducing selective licensing and they have to publicise it when it comes into force. Bury has no plans to introduce a selective licensing scheme.

Will my property need a mandatory HMO licence?

Mandatory HMO licensing applies to buildings consisting of three or more storeys

occupied by five or more tenants in two or more households.

You should remember that when counting the number of storeys in a building, you should not just count the number of storeys within the living accommodation, you should also include:

- Basements and attics if they are occupied or if they have been converted for occupation by residents, or if they are used in connection with the occupation of the HMO by residents e.g. a basement with a residents' laundry room.
- Any storey occupied by a resident landlord and/or the landlord's family.
- All the storeys in residential accommodation, even if they are self-contained.
- Any business premises or storage space on the ground floor or any upper floor. You do not need to count basements used for business or storage unless the basement is the only or principal entrance to the HMO from the street.

What are the conditions for a licence?

In order to grant a licence for a HMO, the Council has to be satisfied that:

- The proposed licence holder and any manager of the property is a fit and proper person.
- The proposed licence holder is the most appropriate person to hold the licence.
- Proper management standards are being

applied at the property.

- The HMO is reasonably suitable or can be made suitable for occupation by the number of tenants allowed under the licence, with at least the minimum prescribed standards of amenities and facilities. These include the number, type and quality of shared bathrooms, toilets and cooking facilities.

The licence application pack contains questions which enables the Council to decide whether or not the landlord and the property meet the criteria and can be given a licence. In some cases the Council will inspect the property before issuing a licence.

What will happen if my property is not up to standard?

If an HMO does not meet the minimum standards, the Council can:

- Grant a licence with conditions that repairs are undertaken or extra amenities

are fitted within a specified timescale.

- Grant a licence for a smaller number of occupants based on the amenities installed.
- In properties with the worst conditions, they may refuse to licence the property if it cannot be brought up to the required standard.

What are the penalties for not complying with licensing laws?

Failure to apply for a licence in respect of a licensable HMO is an offence and can result in a fine of up to £20,000. If a landlord is convicted of operating a licensable HMO without a licence, The Council may apply to the Residential Property Tribunal for a Rent Repayment Order to reclaim money paid to the landlord in Housing benefit whilst there was no licence for the property (up to a maximum of 12 months). Tenants (and former tenants) can also apply for a Rent Repayment Order once the Council has been

awarded a Rent Repayment Order. This would be to claim back the rent they have paid themselves as rent during the same period.

In addition to Rent Repayment Orders, a landlord may not issue a Section 21 Notice in relation to a shorthold tenancy of a part of an unlicensed HMO.

Can I appeal?

Yes. All appeals against decisions made by the Council in relation to HMO licensing are made to the residential Property Tribunal.

For more information on HMO's and HMO licensing please contact:

Regeneration and Housing Standards Team
Bury Metropolitan Borough Council
Textile Hall
Manchester Road
Bury
BL9 0DG
Telephone number: 0161 253 5566

Are you protecting your tenant's deposit?

From 6 April this year all new deposits must be protected in a government-authorised scheme. The new rules apply to all assured shorthold tenancies.

There are three authorised tenancy deposit schemes offering deposit protection, including one custodial scheme and two insurance-based schemes. Landlords and managing agents should find out about these schemes and their legal obligations before taking a deposit. Information on the different schemes and which one would be the best for you can be obtained from:



The Deposit Protection Service
www.depositprotection.com
0870 707 1 707 (custodial)



Tenancy Deposit Solutions Ltd
www.mydeposits.co.uk
info@mydeposits.co.uk
(insurance-based)



The Tenancy Deposit Scheme
www.tds.gb.com
0845 226 7837

Remember, you can reduce the likelihood of deposit disputes with your tenants before they sign the tenancy agreement by:

- Agreeing a detailed list of contents with them (furniture and fittings)
- Recording the condition of the property (use photos if necessary)
- Agree a level of fair wear and tear

Attention all Landlords!

First class service at a competitive price.

We will charge a fee of 10% of rent received plus an initial set up fee.

We will provide you with an unrivalled service.

We will help you maximise the return on your property investment.

With over 30 years combined experience of managing and owning a portfolio of properties, we deliver a standard of service that we, as landlords, would expect to receive.

Please call 01706 231503 and ask for John or Pina. You can also visit us at www.hdconte.co.uk



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