

# accreditation news

the newsletter for private landlords in the Bury area | Summer 2010

## New government ditches Rugg recommendations

The coalition government has scrapped planned new regulations, which came about after the Rugg review of the private rented sector.

Housing Minister Grant Shapps confirmed that there were no plans to introduce "burdensome red tape and bureaucracy" into the sector, due to the vast majority of England's three million private tenants being happy with the service they receive.

Recommendations included a national register of landlords, regulation of letting and managing agents, a housing hotline offering advice to private tenants, and the need for a written tenancy agreement for all

tenancies, along with a "Trip Advisor" style website, comparing landlords.

Councils have been urged to use the wide range of powers they already have at their disposal, to tackle the minority of landlords who offer a poor service.

Council powers already include:

- Powers to force landlords to rectify hazards in their properties.
- Where landlords resist, the ability to make and charge for improvements, and to prohibit use of affected parts of the property.
- Discretionary licensing powers to



Housing Minister Grant Shapps

tackle areas blighted by poorly managed private rented stock.

Plans to increase the annual rental threshold for assured and assured shorthold tenancies from the current level of £25,000 to £100,000, will come into effect from Friday 1 October 2010.

## Bury Landlord Forum

Thursday 16 September 2010

Starts 6pm

Peel Room, Elizabethan Suite, Knowsley St, Bury

Agenda includes:

Impact of the emergency budget on landlords | Speakers from Bury Council's benefits team and the National Landlords Association

Please contact Babette Howard on 07834 652 146 or email [babette.howard@greatplaces.org.uk](mailto:babette.howard@greatplaces.org.uk) to confirm attendance.



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# Enforcement action on empty properties



If domestic properties are in poor condition, it can have an adverse affect on the neighbourhood. If a property looks to be in poor condition and suffers minor vandalism, this often gives the green light to cause more significant damage. Early intervention will result in a minimal cost to the owner, but once a property is badly damaged, the cost to the owner can be overwhelming.

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 Section 215 (s.215) provides a local planning authority with the power to take steps requiring land to be cleaned up when its condition adversely affects the look of the area.

If it appears to the council that their area is being blighted by the condition of neighbouring land and buildings, they may serve a notice on the owner requiring that the situation be fixed.

These notices set out the steps that need to be taken, and the time it

must take for work to be finished. The council also has the power to do the work themselves and recover the cost from the owner.

The use of s.215 is discretionary and it is up to the council to decide whether a notice would be appropriate in any particular case, taking into account all local circumstances.

The local planning authority will consider, for example, the condition of the site, the impact on the surrounding area and the scope of their powers. In some circumstances s215 notices may be used in conjunction with other powers, for example, repair notices in respect of listed buildings or dangerous structure notices. The scope of work that can be required in s215 notices is wide and includes planting, clearance, tidying, enclosure, demolition, re-building, external repairs and repainting.

## Non-compliance

Local councils have the option to

prosecute for non-compliance and / or to carry out the work themselves. The course of action pursued will depend on the circumstances of the case. Where an authority undertakes work by default, then formal debt recovery procedures will be followed. This includes securing a charge against the property and recovery of the debt, through the County or High Court bailiffs, or even the forced sale of the property.

Generally, the local planning authority will try to resolve the matter to reduce the need to use formal notices. However, where an owner fails to engage constructively, then formal notices will be served.

Urban Renewal are actively working with Bury Council's Planning team, taking s215 enforcement action to tackle problematic empty properties.

For further information relating to empty properties please contact Ashleigh Barlow on 0161 253 5512.



# Reminder of Bury housing options



Don't forget that all Accreditation scheme members can advertise their properties for free, in the Town Hall's homeless reception, and also on the

council website [www.bury.gov.uk](http://www.bury.gov.uk).

There is no limit to how many properties you can advertise, and

this service also gives greater access to potential tenants, who will contact you directly.

The council will not be responsible for vetting potential tenants or control who sees the advert. As soon as a property is let, please contact the council, who will update their database.

Adverts go up every Tuesday. If you're interested contact Tom Hoghton at Bury Council on 0161 253 5099, alternatively you can email Tom at [privatelets@bury.gov.uk](mailto:privatelets@bury.gov.uk).

## No change to housing allowance says Osborne



April 2011. These caps will only affect small areas in London, where people are being charged the highest rents.

- The five bedroom category will be removed from April 2011. Bury Council only receives a small number of claims from this group.
- The way rates of Local Housing Allowance is calculated will change from October 2011. Currently, rates are set at the mid point of the range of rents for a particular property size. From the change, rates will be set at the 30th percentile of the range, which will reduce the amounts of Local Housing Allowance being paid across the country.

Following the government's emergency budget in June, it looks like Local Housing Allowance will remain the same for the next few years. However there are a number of proposals to reduce the costs of the scheme.

- The amounts of Local Housing Allowance will be capped from

The Valuation Office has provided figures to show how these changes will affect rates, unfortunately these can only be seen as estimates, as the rates will change between now and October 2011.

- Extra benefits will be paid to disabled tenants who need a carer to stay overnight.
- Extra money will be available through the Discretionary Housing payment scheme, which will help tenants who have shortfalls between the rent they are charged, and the amount of benefit they receive.

One issue which did not feature in the budget was the payment of Local Housing Allowance being made to tenants. Before the election there were pledges made that the option of making payments to landlords would be reinstated, since the election this has not been confirmed by the Department for Work and Pensions.

In the meantime, it remains business as usual at Bury Council, so if you believe your tenant may not be able to cope with dealing with their own payments get in touch.



# E.on launch unique and innovative landlord service



E.on's dedicated landlord service will make sure your properties are serviced to the highest standard, saving you time and resources to deal with other matters.

E.on's service to landlords includes:

- A dedicated landlord telephone line and email address
- Dedicated team of specialist customer service advisors
- Our team also achieved City and Guilds qualifications in energy awareness.
- Online energy efficiency advice to help you save energy and money at [www.eonenergy.com/100ways](http://www.eonenergy.com/100ways)
- Change of tenancy information updated correctly and within agreed timescales
- New prepayment devices issued

within agreed timescales

- Removal of prepayment standing charge when the property is empty and registered in your name (please note standing charge outstanding on a property prior to registering on the service will not be withdrawn)
- Information about your meter, and answers to frequently asked questions available online at [www.eonenergy.com/prepaymentmeter](http://www.eonenergy.com/prepaymentmeter)



## We have a Warmfront winner

Congratulations to local landlady Phyllis Day, who won the Bury Landlord referral prize of a Solio solar powered universal charger worth £50.

Don't forget you can apply for free loft and cavity wall insulation on your tenant's behalf, providing they meet the qualifying criteria.

For more information please contact Babette Howard on 0161 253 7863, mobile 07834 652 146, alternatively you can contact Babette by email at [babette.howard@greatplaces.org.uk](mailto:babette.howard@greatplaces.org.uk).



## Get in touch

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

**Babette Howard (Tuesday – Friday)**

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**Lisa Schofield (Monday – Thursday)**

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